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BY-WAYS ROUND HELICON

THE BALLAD OF THE
"ROYAL ANN"

By Crosbie Garstin,

SONGS IN CAPTIVITY

By R. H. Sauter.

POEMS *By Isaac Rosenberg.*

UNCOLLECTED POETRY
AND PROSE OF WALT
WHITMAN. 2 Vols.

*Collected and edited by
Emory Holloway.*

BY-WAYS ROUND HELICON

A KIND OF ANTHOLOGY

BY
IOLO A. WILLIAMS
AUTHOR OF "POEMS" AND "NEW POEMS"

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
J. C. SQUIRE



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TO
MY WIFE

NOTE

FOR kind permission to reprint one or two short passages, which appeared originally in a slightly different form in *The London Mercury* and *The Observer*, my thanks are due to the editors of those papers.

AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE ON EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY POETRY

A HUNDRED years ago, when the greatest of the Romantics had already written most of their works for a public as yet small, substantial collections of the British Poets were the vogue. No gentleman's library was complete without a set, and neither editors, publishers, nor readers thought it strange that such sets should be mainly composed of verses written during the eighteenth century. A respectable critic of that time might or might not have troubled to inspect closely the obscure volumes of one Keats and one Shelley, but he would certainly be acquainted with the best compositions of Mr. Yalden, Mr. Duke and Mr. King, the elegant Dr. Langhorne and the unfortunate Richard Savage. When Wordsworth attacked his predecessors, nothing was seen in his disquisition but his ingratitude to a century which had taught him much, and his fortunate failure to conform to his own inadequate theories: nobody saw an omen. The eighteenth-century tradition was established; Lord Byron, with all his eccentricities, was

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avowedly indebted to it ; and Mr. Rogers and Mr. Campbell, who would outlive all the young fantastics, were its worthy heirs. Keats dismissed the whole Georgian race in *Sleep and Poetry* :

Ah, dismal-soul'd !

The winds of heaven blew, the ocean roll'd
Its gathering waves—ye felt it not. The blue
Bared its eternal bosom, and the dew
Of summer night collected still to make
The morning precious : Beauty was awake !
Why were ye not awake ? But ye were dead
To things ye knew not of—were closely wed
To musty laws lined out with wretched rule
And compass vile ; so that ye taught a school
Of dolts to smooth, inlay, and clip, and fit,
Till, like the certain wands of Jacob's wit,
Their verses tallied. Easy was the task :
A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask
Of Poesy. Ill-fated, impious race !
That blasphemed the bright Lyrist to his face,
And did not know it, no, they went about,
Holding a poor, decrepit standard out,
Mark'd with most flimsy mottoes, and in large
The name of one Boileau !

They did not know that this opinion would become so general as to be regarded as a commonplace. Yet it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that for generations past our critics and our cultivated public, looking backwards on our poetry, have been content to leap the eighteenth

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century and concentrate almost exclusively on the work of the Elizabethan and Caroline eras. Pope and Dryden, who could not be overlooked, have been underrated ; lip-service has been paid to Prior and Gay ; for the others, only a few such as Gray, Collins, Cowper and Goldsmith have received consideration, and even those have been regarded as chiefly interesting by virtue of their position as “ precursors of the Romantic Movement ” or “ heralds of the return to Nature.” As a fact they were the fine flower of the century ; and the merits found in them were present in very many of their lesser contemporaries. In any event, those who lacked the qualities which appealed to the nineteenth century had virtues of their own. Occasionally a critic like Mr. Saintsbury, Mr. Gosse, Mr. Seccombe or Mr. Austin Dobson has called attention to this ; *The Hermit* and *The Choice*, *The Hymn to the Naiads*, *The Nocturnal Reverie*, *Grongar Hill* and *The Rosciad* have all had their modern admirers. At rare intervals there has appeared a whole-hearted champion of the eighteenth century, such as Mr. Courthope, whose temperamental affinity to it made him put its poetry higher than any of the critics mentioned above would have put it, and who counter-attacked the Romantics with a list of charges as long as their own. I believe that the efforts of these and other men, exceptional in their freedom from literary fashion,

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have at last begun to restore our sense of proportion. Even they, however, who had to expend energy on justifying the right of eighteenth-century poetry to exist at all, were not able to devote themselves to the resuscitation of deserving minors. That work will be done, and its performance will synchronise with the growth of a more diffused inclination to see the eighteenth century as it was, to understand it and to do it—I speak only of its poetry—justice. It is now sufficiently removed from us. The necessity of fighting it was over long ago ; the prolongation of the war has been in part due to ignorance and misunderstanding, and in part merely mechanical, the unthinking perpetuation of a habit.

I happen to live in a fragment of eighteenth-century London ; Middlesex it then was. Little lawns behind palings slope to the river in front ; the old brick houses have brick-walled gardens, trimly decorative doorways, occasionally a slender balcony ; and, inside, white-panelled rooms and shutters that fold back into the walls. Neither the contours, nor the colours, nor the general “ atmosphere ” of this bend of the Thames can have changed much in the last hundred and fifty years. The scene does not inspire awe, or ravish with an unearthly beauty ; the houses are mellow, but not venerable ; on a sunny afternoon the *genius loci* seems to say : “ The French Revolution passed, tumults and wars and rhapsodies

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passed ; but this is civilisation, this is competence, this is establishment and a just harmony of the things most pleasant and most comfortable." At the end of the walk, behind the great old elm-tree whose wrinkled trunk is fixed in the stone pavement, there is a stone church with a squat tower and a little spire above it ; homely also, but English of an earlier day. On the north side of the quiet graveyard is a narrow and secluded walk, and amongst the monuments to be seen from this is a solid lichened structure surrounded by iron railings. It was erected, soon after the eighteenth century had closed, to the memory of Philip James Loutherbrough, the painter, and the inscription states that—

With Talents brilliant and supereminent as an Artist
He united the still more envied Endowments of
a cultivated, enlarged and elegant Mind,
adding to both the supreme Qualities of the Heart,
which entitled him as a Man and a Christian to the
cordial Respect of the Wise and Good.
In him Science was associated with Faith, Piety with
Liberality,
Virtue with Suavity of Manners,
and the rational use of this World with the ennobling
hope of a world to come.

A deathless Fame will record his professional Excellence,
but to the Hand of Friendship belongs the Office
of strewing on his Tomb those moral flowers
which displayed themselves in his Life
and which rendered him estimable as a Social Being.

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Loutherborough's professional excellence is not now so generally esteemed as it might be; though he still enjoys a modest honour at Greenwich Hospital and at Dulwich. The epitaph—for even the longest epitaph cannot be a full biography—makes no mention of some of his odder achievements, his friendship with Cagliostro, his invention of the Eidophusicon and his discovery, occluded by the breaking of a crucible at the last moment, of the philosopher's stone. Yet underneath its formal phraseology can be perceived more sincerity than is general in "lapidary inscriptions," and, whether or not it is complete as the description of a particular man, it certainly holds good as the formulation of the ideals of an age. Mr. Chesterton has spoken of "The Victorian Compromise"; the Victorian Compromise was far less perfect and positive than the Georgian Compromise. Compared with that it was little more than a conspiracy of silence, among conspirators who were mostly traitors. The Georgians, who were neither self-blinded nor fanatical, had made up their minds what they believed and what they wanted, what was "rational enjoyment" and what the qualities that made man "estimable as a Social Being." Their view of life appears to us limited; but they held it, and they held it not without reason. Their poetry reflected their general outlook; and processes analogous to those which led to their theory and

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practice in Art may be discovered in the other spheres of their activity.

In other words, there were reasons. All chapters may look alike in a history-book, and all noises may be equally subdued by virtue of their remoteness. But fever and convalescence, breakdown and recovery, abuse and protest, were things experienced even by persons who wore picturesque clothes, very queer, different from our own. Reconstruction, by the same token, was an idea familiar to the early eighteenth century, though perhaps the "blessed word" had not been invented. The seventeenth century had been, and not merely in England, a century of civil wars. The flowers of the Renaissance and the Reformation had brought forth their vivid and variegated fruit. The problem that faced men in all departments was that of the restoration of order. A *modus vivendi* had to be found, lest chaos should return. The lucidity and rationality of Dryden was a necessary corrective when Elizabethan luxuriance had run to seed in extravagant tropes, and, when largely under Donne's influence, ruggedness and obscurity had been cultivated to a point at which they threatened the complete ruin of poetry. Dryden knew what he was doing; Pope, when he talked of "correctness," was not speaking of the artificial rules of "one Boileau," but of the immortal laws of common sense. He wanted no obscurity, no wild hap-

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hazard shots, no inaccuracies of phrase, no tangle of irrelevant images, no harsh and discordant lines. His garden may have been too tidy; but his campaign was waged against weeds, not against forest trees or wild flowers. It was a necessary campaign, and the victory overwhelmed the conquered and seriously embarrassed the conquerors.

The eighteenth-century reconstruction was a complete success. There probably never was a time when taste was more uniform and when men were more generally agreed about institutions. Under the crust there were the Wesleyans, and the prisons which John Howard threw open to the daylight, and the weavers, who so puzzled Horace Walpole, and the discontented peasantry—allowances must be made for the pictures of a doctrinaire Radical—of *Caleb Williams*. But these things caused no great disturbance. They were not completely ignored. Howard's campaign led to reforms; it was Dr. Johnson, a whole-hearted advocate of "subordination," who said that the test of every Government was the provision it made for the poor: Wilberforce was a typical product of the century, which, for all its scepticism about Utopias, was genuinely philanthropic. Nevertheless, the extreme politics of the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries scarcely existed; and the unity which marked the political world was characteristic

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also of the artistic. Pope, like Walpole, had his enemies ; but the opinions of both were generally accepted. Pope was abused in Popean couplets, and Walpole was inveighed against on sound Whig principles. We were a nation of Whigs, and there were few recalcitrants. Blake was a late and a lonely figure, and Kit Smart (the century ended before the *Song to David* was recognised) was a conformist until he lost his senses. Even when men were aberrant in one way they retained a certain measure of respectability by an observance of convention in other ways. Incorrect morals did not seem so alarming when embodied in correct verse, and impropriety of sentiment was partially redeemed by propriety of diction. Extravagant opinions expressed in extravagant forms were almost unknown. There was no doubt at all that the seventeenth century was over. The Riot Act had been read and the disorderly mob had entirely dispersed.

Reaction, indisputably, went too far. Reaction usually does. Men living in the middle of things to which they object may be pardoned for a lack of perspective ; at any rate, they always exhibit it. A debauch of fantasy and freedom was followed by an orgy of order and common sense. The freedom had run to licence, the conventionalism ran to stiffness and pedantry. The rhapsodies of the "metaphysicals" were followed by poems

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from which the mystical element was almost entirely absent. Poets who had strained themselves to find new epithets and devise new images were followed by poets who were overprone to use a constitutional stock of images and whose vocabulary was altogether too restricted and hackneyed. The contrast was like the contrast of Palladian and of Gothic architecture. Mr. Courthope, who went as far as any man could in defence of the eighteenth century, made a suggestion that was ingenious but not adequate. He detected two main elements in our poetic literature, the Poetry of Romance and the Poetry of Manners, and argued that, a wave of the former being exhausted, the eighteenth century returned to the latter. It took up, he said, the tradition of Chaucer and Shakespeare. But Shakespeare was all things, and if Chaucer be merely a poet of manners, the eighteenth century did not produce a man who could hold a candle to him ; that breadth and freshness and gusto did not come again. The eighteenth century may have had the "wine," but it had little of the "Provençal song." Its defects were defects of stiffness, of over-restraint ; the term "enthusiast" it employed only in reproach ; the music of its verse, though often charming, was not varied ; the exultations of its spirit were tempered ; it tended (though here and there were exceptions all the more welcome because of their rarity) to

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avoid expressing in their full force its emotions concerning the things which move men most. Its love songs are seldom passionate; its landscapes have usually been supervised by the landscape gardener; it made few contributions to the body of our most ardent religious verse; and Dr. Johnson was very representative of it in confessing privately that the fear of death was a thing which haunted him daily, whilst refraining from expressing that fear in his verse. Juvenal, Martial and Horace would have been at home in the century; Virgil would have found links with it; the great Greeks would have been alien to it. Much of its best verse was written by clergymen of the Church of England, Erastians all, and by noble lords who read the Latin poets.

Yet there is as much sincerity in eighteenth-century verse as in that of other periods, whatever its restraints and taboos; the transports were moderated, but the feeling was there; and the general standard of technical accomplishment was high. Pope, Churchill and Hogarth, Gray, Goldsmith and Richard Wilson may have had their limitations, but the art of a century whose observation and whose sentiment were manifested in such men as those was not contemptible. The prose of the age, in comparison with the work of other ages, was relatively greater than its poetry; its poetry may be admitted to be the poetry of a prose age. Accept this: read

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Langhorne and Akenside in the light not of Shelley nor of Browning, but of Burke, Johnson and the author of *Amelia*, and, when you have become accustomed to the quiet, the dignity, the formal phraseology, you will find in them manliness and tenderness, conviction and affection.

I think that to some extent appreciation of the eighteenth-century poets may revive in the near future ; such a revival would be, I believe, a useful and a significant thing. The eighteenth century is not the only century which ran to an extreme. Ever since the age of Shakespeare, who was a microcosm of the whole universe of poetry, the tendency has always been for the pendulum to swing too far one way or the other, towards what Mr. Courthope roughly and comprehensively called the Poetry of Romance or towards what he called the Poetry of Manners. If the dangers of one generation have been complacency, formalism, lack of passion, those of another have been remoteness from common life, rhetorical verbiage, and a simulated excess of sensibility. Few, I suppose, would wish that all the characteristics of eighteenth-century poetry should again become dominant. The prevalent state of spirit and doctrine led some men, who might in another age have written poetry of the kind which we believe to be the highest, to devote themselves principally to what, with all its merits, was sublimated journalism. Pope himself,

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the greatest poetical wit, satirist and essayist we have, had it in him to be more than that ; many of his successors devoted themselves too much for our taste to controversy and satire, to the neat record of merely interesting urban observation. Satire and instruction may be the one delightful, and the other edifying ; but the sedulous cultivation of either in poetry is apt to cramp the heart and the imagination. *Sympathy: a Poem*, and *An Essay on Immorality: in Three Parts* do not need to be repeated. All the dexterity and charm of the Augustans and Georgians cannot prevent most of us from wishing that they had cultivated another mood and allowed their nobler emotions freer play. He who goes to poetry for exaltation, for pain, or for consolation will certainly not go to the eighteenth century as often as to others. Yet whatever they did—and, far more frequently than most people allow, they did write movingly as well as beautifully—the best of them can give us salutary lessons in exactitude and straightforwardness, honesty and the avoidance of over-statement. The bad poets have faults as gross as those of other ages ; the better poets, considered as artistic influences, would certainly not be so dangerous, by virtue of their mere mannerisms, as their predecessors the “ metaphysicals.” We may never achieve the union of the best qualities of all ages, in thought and expression ; but we

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may at least aim at it, so far as our conscious activity can go. The history of civilisation is the history of exaggerated reactions against doctrines, persons, institutions and tastes. It may be well on occasion to go to extremes : it is a mistake to be carried to them.

This book, however, is not intended to be an argument in a controversy, much less the manifesto of a Back-to-Queen-Anne movement. Mr. Williams likes the sort of thing that the eighteenth century did well, and he confesses to an especial fondness for small authors who have received less than their due. Opinions about the value of eighteenth-century poetry as compared with that produced in other ages may vary, and it is difficult to believe that there will ever come a time when many readers will regard it as one of the chief glories of our literature. But it is altogether beyond dispute that for a hundred years it has been neglected more than any other considerable body of English literature, and that many delightful eighteenth-century poems are only not appreciated because they are never read. Reaction, natural reaction, went so far that only a few of the most eminent eighteenth-century poets have been able to command a reluctant attention. Men have been scouring the libraries of the world for the feeblest of Elizabethan sonnet-sequences, and a hundred editors have been reprinting the *Clevelands* and *Cartwrights* and *Godolphins* and

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Chamberlaynes of the Caroline era, and pointing with ecstasy at what Pope called the—

One simile that solitary shines
In the dry desert of a thousand lines.

It does no harm, and whenever a good thing is rescued from oblivion we are so much the better off. But the fact that the seventeenth century produced greater poets than the eighteenth does not imply that any seventeenth-century writer is better worth consideration than any eighteenth-century writer. Mr. Williams, in the present volume, presents many charming verses by minor poets, some of whom have probably never been quoted since the death of Pitt. There are very many more whom his readers will encounter should he continue, as I hope he will, his personally-conducted tours around the By-ways. Let us assume, though it is a large assumption, that the best things of Pomfret and Parnell, Dyer and Akenside stand no longer in need of proclamation; that Blair and the Scotch poetesses and Mrs. Barbauld are at least partially known to everybody who reads histories of English literature; that there was no need for Mr. Williams to subjoin Tickell's once celebrated ballad to the two that he now reprints. There are still dozens of poets who deserve a modest rehabilitation, some even who did not even bask

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in a contemporary sunshine as a compensation for the absence of that posthumous fame to which poets so invariably and so inexplicably aspire. Mr. Mason, whose satirical poems, particularly *The Dean and the Squire* and the delicious *Epistle to Milles* (if he wrote it), are excellent, cut a sufficient figure ; his verse pamphlets are perhaps commoner than any in the bound collections of the time. Mickle and Sir William Jones, Whitehead, Savage and Robert Ferguson, in all of whom something worth having is to be found, were all widely read during, or just after, their own time. So, in whole or in part, were John Byrom, Lord Nugent, Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, Logan and Bruce. There are obscurer men still who do not deserve to be ignored. In anthologies of a hundred years ago may be found considerable selections from Scott of Amwell, Lovibond and Penrose, of which parts have withered like plants cut off at the roots, but parts are still fresh to the sympathetic reader. I have never in any modern book seen an allusion to the *Monody* (on his dead wife) of Cuthbert Shaw, a reckless and unfortunate man whose genius was acknowledged by Dr. Johnson, who dealt sparingly in his commendations of contemporary poets. The *Monody* was a famous piece in its day and for long afterwards. Shaw's picture of his wife's death in childbirth and his reflections on the infant she has left him ("My little darling!—dearer to me grown

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By all the tears thou'st caused—O strange to hear !
Bought with a life yet dearer than thy own ") are
profoundly moving ; and how well he employed
the idiom of his time to express natural feeling
may be illustrated by the image he uses to show
the probable course of his own struggles against
a cruelty that cannot be undone :

Thus the poor bird, by some disastrous fate,
Caught and imprison'd in a lonely cage,
Torn from its native fields, and dearer mate,
Flutters awhile, and spends its little rage :
But, finding all its efforts weak and vain,
No more it pants and rages for the plain ;
Moping a while, in sullen mood
Droops the sweet mourner—but, ere long,
Prunes its light wings and pecks its food,
And meditates the song :
Serenely sorrowing, breathes its piteous case,
And with its plaintive warblings saddens all the
place.

Far worse poems are now on everybody's lips ;
but even the modern enthusiasts for the eighteenth century have overlooked it. They have overlooked with more excuse Charles Jenner's *Town Eclogues*, charming excursions in the manner of Gay which were never well known at any time. There are good things in James Scott's *Odes*, and many scattered passages of merit in the satires of Combe and others. It is not my busi-

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ness to tell Mr. Williams, who knows all about it, where to pursue his researches ; I have merely mentioned a few names which do not occur in the present volume as an illustration of my belief that there are far more good fish in Mr. Williams's sea (or ornamental water, if you like) than have yet come out of it. With that assurance I retire.

J. C. SQUIRE.

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I, singularly moved
To love the lovely that are not beloved.

So wrote **C**oventry Patmore, and his lines may serve as a text for this little book of mine ; for I have always experienced a greater thrill—perhaps even a perversely great thrill—in the discovery of some beauty, quaintness, or pleasant conceit in an unexpected quarter, wherein I have been a-fishing all by myself, than in sharing with a million other folk the patent universal loveliness of the great poets. This may be mere stubbornness upon my part, or a false pride, or it may be pity for those whose little share of wit has been quite shouldered out of view by their betters. I do not think that I myself really know. All that I am sure of is that a pretty lyric picked out of the sixpenny box, four lines of reality in the midst of a wilderness of fustian, or anything, almost, that is wonderfully out of keeping with its context, is a joy to me greater, in some odd way, than Grecian Urns or Skylarks.

As an example of what is out of keeping with

its context, let us begin by considering one little item in the literary history of the Wesley family. Most people, when they think of that family's contributions to literature, think of sermons, and lugubriously pious letters from John—"You must not expect much health on this side of the grave. It is enough that His Grace is sufficient to you"; or, "God is cleansing England and America, and sweeping away the wicked with the besom of destruction" (a work which, unfortunately, seems since to have been discontinued). Or they think of the hymns of John and Charles, and even, possibly, of Samuel, their elder brother, who was Master of Blundell's School, Tiverton, published a quarto *Poems on Several Occasions* in 1736, and wrote some good hymns and these charming lines *From a Hint in the Minor Poets* :

No ! not for Those of Women born,
Not so unlike the Die is cast
For, after all our Vaunt and Scorn,
How very small the Odds at last !

Him, rais'd to Fortune's utmost Top,
With Him beneath her Feet compare ;
And One has nothing more to hope,
And One has nothing more to fear.

Another poem of Samuel Wesley the Younger's is *An Epitaph*, which, though unequal, seems to me to have in its best verses a neat and humorous pathos that is very delightful. Here it is :

A Clergyman his Labour ends,
And weary sleeps at Rest below ;
Who, though his Fortune found not Friends,
In Person hardly knew a Foe.

Minding no Business but his own,
For Party never loud to strive ;
His Flock not only mourn him gone,
But even lov'd him when alive.

A Conscience clean his Forehead cheer'd,
Unsour'd by Poverty was he ;
And always prais'd, though not prefer'd,
By ev'ry Prelate in the See.

But Good Men view with small regard
The Treatment here on Earth they find ;
Secure in Heav'n to meet Reward
From the great Bishop of Mankind.

Yet another poem must I quote from this book, before I pass on to the one about which (though you might not guess it) I am really writing at the moment.

THE MONUMENT

Post Funera Virtus

A Monster, in a Course of Vice grown old,
Leaves to his gaping Heir his ill-gain'd Gold ;
Straight breathes his Bust, straight are his Virtues shown,
Their Date commencing with the sculptur'd Stone.

If on his specious Marble we rely,
 Pity a Worth like His should ever die !
 If Credit to his real Life we give,
 Pity a Wretch like Him should ever live !

Which says in eight lines very nearly all that a distinguished American "stunt-poet" recently filled a whole book with. But let me add that when I say that Samuel Wesley the Younger wrote these poems, I should perhaps say that I believe he did, for his preface contains the following uncomfortable sentence: "There are a few Verses in this Collection, which the Author of the rest cannot lay claim to as his own; for the Insertion of which, if the Writers will pardon, He is persuaded the Readers will have Occasion to thank him." Which is a fairly naive way of admitting a theft, especially after having begun his preface by telling the reader "that it was not any Opinion of Excellence in the Verses themselves that occasioned their present Collection and Publication, but merely the Profit proposed by the Subscription" !



But, as I was going to say a page or two back, what I chiefly like to think of in Wesleyan literature is the quaint duodecimo book of comic verse, *Maggots, or Poems on Several Subjects never before Handled*. By a Schollar, with which, in 1685, the Wesley family made its first literary bow. This

was by the father of Samuel, John, and Charles, the Rev. Samuel Wesley, the elder, of whom John Dunton, his friend and publisher, said : “ Mr. Wesley was much celebrated for his Vein of Poetry ; tho’ those that allow of no second-rate in that Art have endeavour’d to lessen his Reputation.” Such traducers shall have no sympathy of mine ; for the poet was true to his title-page—what more could one ask of a poet ?—and many of his subjects are, indeed, unique. Animals were a favourite theme of his very lively muse, which wrote on several dogs, *On a Cow’s Tail*, on *A Tame Snake left in a Box of Bran was devoured by Mice after a Great Battle*, and even *A Pindaric Poem on Three Skipps of a Louse* ! Unfortunately in the last instance the treatment is hardly upon a par with the sublimity of the theme. Other titles of poems in this cheerful little book are : *An Anacreontique on a Pair of Breeches* ; *On a Discourteous Damsel that call’d the Right Worshipful A thor (an’t please ye !)* *Sawcy Puppy* (a remark which provoked an obvious and unclerical *tu quoque*) ; *A Tobacco Pipe* ; and *On Two Souldiers killing one another for a Groat*, which verses have the following affecting beginning :

Full doleful Tales have oft been told,
By Chimney warm in Winter cold,
About the Sacred Thirst for Gold ;
To hear ’em half ’twould mad ye.

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To Jayl how many Headlong run,
 How many a hopeful Youth's undone,
 How many a vile ungracious Son
 For this has murder'd Daddy ?

Another agreeable effort is *A Pindaricque on the Grunting of a Hog*, from which I venture to quote a few lines :

Freeborn Pindaric never does refuse,
 Either a lofty, or a humble Muse.

Harmonious Hog draw near !

No bloody Butchers here,
 Thou need'st not fear.

Harmonious Hog draw near, and from thy beauteous
 Snowt,

Whilst we attend with Ear
 Like thine prik't up devout,
 To taste thy sugry Voice, which here, and there,
 With wanton Curls, Vibrates around the Circling Air,
 Harmonious Hog ! Warble some Anthem out !

It is a worthy treatment of a worthy subject, though hardly what one has learnt to associate with the name of Wesley. Sometimes, however, the reverend gentleman's lyre had a more tender tone, as in his lines *On the Bearfac'd Lady*, which begin :

Too charming Maid, whose Viznomy divine
 Shoots Darts around like any Porcupine.

One of his best poems, which has a dash of jaunty lyricism about it, is that called *The Lyar*, of which the following is the opening stanza :

For Naked Truth let others write,
And fairly prove that Black's not White ;
Quarrel and Scold, then Scratch and Bite,
Till they're with Cuffing weary :
Give me a Lye, trickt neat and gay,
As fine as any Hedge in May !
Most think so too, altho' they'll say,
Perhaps, the clean Contrary.

Samuel Wesley the elder grew old and in later life wrote several most religious books of poetry—*The History of the Old and New Testament attempted in Verse*, for instance,—but none which I cherish as I do his first flight ; not that I am likely ever to possess this, for to do so (unless I should happen to be excessively lucky at a bookstall) I should have to have about twelve pounds to spare—a most unlikely contingency. Yet on Sunday mornings, when I look out of my study window and see the good Wesleyan folk on their way to chapel, I like to cast my mind back about two hundred and forty years, and think of *Maggots*.

It has long been a tradition among poets to praise wine, beer, and spirituous liquors. *Cider* was the subject of an epic by John Phillips, and Gay's first published poem was called *Wine*.

Yet there have also been poets who praised the natural drink of man—water. I am not referring to Barham, who, in *The Ingoldsby Legends*, wrote :

That an ancient Welsh poet, one Pyndar ap Tudor,
Was right in proclaiming “Ariston men Udor !”
Which means “The pure Element. Is for Man’s belly
meant !”

And that Gin’s but a Snare of old Nick the deluder !

for it is possible that he was not wholly serious in what he said there. But there have been other and more weighty “water-poets”—Dr. Armstrong, for instance, the author of that not at all unreadable didactic poem, *The Art of Preserving Health*, which appeared in quarto in 1744 and went into an enormous number of editions in the subsequent eighty years or so. Armstrong’s poem is divided into four books: *Air*, *Diet*, *Exercise*, and *The Passions*; from the point of view of health it is not enormously instructive, though, while his moral standards are not abnormally high, he yet has a good deal of common sense. But often where his advice is best his blank verse is least poetical, though he was a writer, in passages, of very great power, and at the most unexpected moments capable of very musical and beautiful detached lines. I have just reread Armstrong’s poem, and while doing so jotted down on a sheet of paper some of these unexpected lovelinesses. Here they are, given with only so much context

as is necessary to explain their grammatical construction :

“ And all the pale tribes halting in the train
Of vice and heedless pleasure.”

“ While yet you breathe, away ! the rural wilds
Invite ; the mountains call you, and the vales,
The woods, the streams, and each ambrosial breeze
That fans the ever undulating sky.”

“ Mark where the dry champain
Swells into cheerful hills ; where Marjoram
And Thyme, the love of bees, perfume the air ;
And where the Cynorrhodon with the Rose
For fragrance vies.”

(A very oddly lovely bit this about the rose.
The flower with the long name, by the way, is
merely the wild-briar !)

“ A barren waste, where not a garland grows
To bind the Muses' brow.”

“ Ever with gentle tide to ebb and flow
From this to that.”

“ But ah ! what woes remain ! Life rolls apace,
And that incurable disease, old age.”

“ While the soft evening saddens into night.”

“ The happiest you, of all that e'er were mad.”

It is curious to notice that, whereas these best lines of Armstrong's show a very simple perfection of English, his worst fault was the clean opposite of this virtue, a tendency to use far-fetched and clumsy paraphrases, as when, for example, he wishes to speak of those who take cold baths, and does so in these terms :

“ Against the rigors of a damp cold heav'n
To fortify their bodies, some frequent
The gelid cistern.”

But sometimes, even in his more florid style, he can write finely sustained and sonorous passages, like that at the end of the second book :

“ This huge rotundity we tread grows old ;
And all those worlds that roll around the sun,
The sun himself, shall die ; and ancient Night
Again involve the desolate abyss :
Till the great FATHER through the lifeless gloom
Extend His arm to light another world,
And bid new planets roll by other laws.
For thro' the regions of unbounded space,
Where unconfin'd omnipotence has room,
BEING, in various systems, fluctuates still
Between creation and abhorr'd decay ;
It ever did ; perhaps and ever will.
New worlds are still emerging from the deep ;
The old descending, in their turns to rise.”

That surely is a passage of blank verse which, though

it has some faults, has great merits for which it deserves some sort of celebrity. And so, as an example of very bare, vivid, narrative description, has this, which tells how the plague spread in England :

Of many thousands few untainted 'scap'd ;
 Of those infected fewer 'scap'd alive :
 Of those who liv'd some felt a second blow ;
 And whom the second spar'd a third destroy'd.
 Frantic with fear, they sought by flight to shun
 The fierce contagion. O'er the mournful land
 Th' infected city pour'd her hurrying swarms :
 Rous'd by the flames that fir'd her seats around,
 Th' infected country rush'd into the town.
 Some, sad at home, and in the desert some,
 Abjur'd the fatal commerce of mankind ;
 In vain : where'er they fled the Fates pursued.
 Others with hopes more specious, cross'd the main,
 To seek protection in far-distant skies ;
 But none they found. It seem'd the general air
 Was then at enmity with English blood.

The last line and a half have, rather strangely, something of a Shakespearean tang about them. Occasionally Armstrong's blank verse is much more in harmony with the temper of his age than are the passages which, so far, I have quoted, and he writes a kind of equivalent to the heroic couplet satires which were so popular. Such a passage is this, from the end of the fourth book :

There is a Charm : a Power that sways the breast ;
 Bids every Passion revel or be still ;
 Inspires with Rage, or all your Cares dissolves ;
 Can sooth Distraction, and almost Despair.
 That Power is Music : Far beyond the stretch
 Of those unmeaning warblers on our stage ;
 Those clumsy Heroes, those fat-headed Gods,
 Who move no Passion justly but Contempt :
 Who, like our dancers (light indeed and strong !)
 Do wondrous feats, but never heard of grace.
 The fault is ours ; we bear those monstrous arts,
 Good Heaven ! we praise them : we, with loudest
 peals,
 Applaud the fool that highest lifts his heels ;
 And, with insipid show of rapture, die
 Of idiot notes, impertinently long.

As the reader will perceive, the subject and the
 manner have even coaxed the Doctor into a rhyme
 in one place, and in another one could almost
 swear he had just seen a performance of *The
 Ring* !



But what has all this to do with the praise of
 water ? Nothing, save that the having to quote
 from him has led me into this long digression,
 in the course of which I hope that I may
 have led at least one reader to an appreciation of
 some of Dr. Armstrong's merits. Let me now,
 therefore, hasten to bring in my water-drinking
 quotation :

O comfortable streams ! With eager lips
And trembling hand the languid thirsty quaff
New life in you ; fresh vigor fills their veins.
No warmer cups the rural ages knew ;
None warmer sought the sires of human-kind.
Happy in temperate peace ! Their equal days
Felt not th' alternate fits of feverish mirth,
And sick dejection. Still serene and pleas'd,
They knew no pains but what the tender soul
With pleasure yields to, and would ne'er forget.
Blest with divine immunity from ails,
Long centuries they liv'd ; their only fate
Was ripe old age, and rather sleep than death.

In a more scientific state of mind, a few moments later, he continues :

Learn temperance, friends ; and hear without disdain
The choice of water. Thus the Coan sage
Opin'd, and thus the learn'd of every school.
What least of foreign particles partakes
Is best : The lightest then ; what bears the touch
Of fire the least, and soonest mounts in air ;
The most insipid ; the most void of smell.

The Doctor does, however, admit the use of alcohol under certain circumstances, for he goes on :

Nothing like simple element dilutes
The food, or gives the chyle so soon to flow.
But where the stomach, indolently given,
Toys with its duty, animate with wine
Th' insipid stream : Tho' golden Ceres yields
A more voluptuous, a more sprightly draught ;
Perhaps more active.

Armstrong was a Scotchman, and the last line or two are, I take it, intended to refer, "in the most delicate manner in the world," to whisky.



It is obvious, and a matter of history, that Dr. Armstrong was strongly under the influence of Thomson in his poetry. He was also, I think, influenced, at any rate in choice of subject, by Matthew Green, another of my water-praising poets, whose poem *The Spleen* had appeared posthumously in 1737, in octavo, with a preface by Richard Glover, who wrote *Leonidas* (an epic in twelve books), *The Athenaid* (another epic in thirty books) and the affecting ballad of *Admiral Hosier's Ghost*. Hear what Green has to say on the subject in hand :

I always choose the plainest food
To mend viscosity of blood.
Hail ! water gruel, healing power,
Of easy access to the poor ;
Thy help love's confessors implore,
And doctors secretly adore :
To thee I fly, by thee dilute—
Through veins my blood doth quicker shoot ;
And by swift current throws off clean
Prolific particles of spleen.

I do wish that some musician with a sense of humour would set that passage to music—fine,

pompous music, with a regular, rather Handelian beat, such as might be sung by massed choirs in the Crystal Palace or the Albert Hall. Indeed, he might make a very good little cycle of settings from *The Spleen*, which is one of the most original and sprightly poems of the eighteenth century, and shows its author to have been a man of strong native wit, if at times of rather uncouth methods of versification. The subject of the poem, which is in epistolary form, is how so to regulate one's life as to keep free from the dumps—or more exactly, as Dr. John Aikin put it in his 1796 edition of Green's poems, "from that mixture of littleness and melancholy which has been denominated the Spleen." Green's lines are rugged, but full of vigorous images and pertinent and lively precepts, and, as he justly claims, he owes nothing to any other poet :

The child is genuine, you can trace,
 Throughout, the sire's transmitted face.
 Nothing is stol'n : my Muse, though mean,
 Draws from the spring she finds within ;
 Nor vainly buys what Gildon sells,
 Poetic buckets for dry wells.

This taunt, of course, is addressed to those who versified by the aid of Charles Gildon's *The Complete Art of Poetry*, which appeared first in 1718. A passage which I wish my composer would set

to music also is this, which contains the most famous line in *The Spleen* :

To cure the mind's wrong biass, Spleen,
Some recommend the bowling-green ;
Some, hilly walks ; all, exercise ;
Fling but a stone, the giant dies ;
Laugh and be well ; monkeys have been
Extreme good doctors for the Spleen ;
And kitten, if the humour hit,
Has harlequin'd away the fit.

Or he might try his hand at setting these lines about hunting :

Hunting I reckon very good
To brace the nerves, and stir the blood ;
But after no field-honours itch,
Atchiev'd by leaping hedge and ditch.
While Spleen lies soft relax'd in bed,
Or o'er coal-fires inclines the head,
Hygea's sons with hound and horn,
And jovial cry awake the morn :
These see her from her dusky plight,
Smear'd by th' embraces of the night,
With rosal wash redeem her face,
And prove herself of Titan's race,
And mounting in loose robes the skies,
Shed light and fragrance, as she flies.
Then horse and hound fierce joy display,
Exulting at the Hark-away,
And in pursuit o'er tainted ground
From lungs robust field-notes resound.

Then, as St. George the dragon slew,
Spleen pierc'd, trod down, and dying view,
While all the spirits are on wing,
And woods, and hills, and vallies ring.

Green was a Quaker by origin (it is one of the few things we know about him), but he seems not to have been an ardent member of the Society (indeed, we know, also, that its narrowness disgusted him), and he practised occasional conformity, which he defended in his poem :

I rail not with mock-patriot grace
At folks, because they are in place,
Nor, hir'd to praise with stallion pen,
Serve the ear-lechery of men ;
But to avoid religious jarrs
The laws are my expositors,
Which in my doubting mind create
Conformity to church and state.
I go, pursuant to my plan,
To Mecca with the caravan ;
And think it right in common sense
Both for diversion and defence.

From which I gather that Green was rather commonsensible than spiritually-minded, a conclusion which is borne out by a passage a few lines later :

Happy the man, who, innocent,
Grieves not at ills he can't prevent ;

His skiff does with the current glide,
 Not puffing pull'd against the tide ;
 He, paddling by the scuffling crowd,
 Sees unconcern'd life's wager row'd,
 And when he can't prevent foul play,
 Enjoys the folly of the fray.

It is not surprising to be told that he performed his duties at the Customs House, of which he was an official, to the general satisfaction. In another very jolly little passage he uses a vivid and just image of the distribution—or the promise of distribution—of places by the court favourite of the hour : a subject dear to eighteenth-century poets, among whom, on this theme, Green was well able to hold his own.

I in no soul-consumption wait
 Whole years at levees of the great,
 And hungry hopes regale the while
 On the spare diet of a smile.
 There you may see the idol stand
 With mirrour in his wanton hand ;
 Above, below, now here, now there
 He throws about the sunny glare ;
 Crowds pant, and press to seize the prize,
 The gay delusion of their eyes.

It is interesting (or, at any rate, it is amusing) here to consider John Gay's treatment—more

urbane, more witty, less imaginative—of the same subject. In his *A Letter to a Lady, occasioned by the arrival of Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales* (1714), he writes :

Since all my schemes were baulk'd, my last resort,
I left the Muses to frequent the Court ;
Pensive each night, from room to room I walk'd,
To one I bow'd, and with another talk'd ;
Inquir'd what news, or such a lady's name,
And did the next day, and the next, the same.
Places, I found, were daily giv'n away,
And yet no friendly Gazette mention'd Gay.

There is no doubt which of our two poets wrote the better verse, nor, I think, which of them had the more practical—more manly, even—point of view.



There are very many other spirited bits in *The Spleen*, but I do not wish to devote an extravagant amount of this little book to one long poem (and moreover, dear reader, I want to leave you some plums to pick for yourself), so I will give you just this one more :

You, friend, like me, the trade of rhyme
Avoid, elab'rate waste of time,
Nor are content to be undone,
To pass for Phœbus' crazy son.

Poems, the hop-grounds of the brain,
 Afford the most uncertain gain ;
 And lott'ries never tempt the wise
 With blanks so many to a prize.

How many poets, crack-brained and perhaps
 crack-hearted, could endorse that ? Yes. But
 whoever became a poet out of wisdom ?



There are, I think, only six other poems—
 short ones—by Matthew Green, and they are
 all to be found in Dodsley's *Miscellany*. One is
 an acute trifle : *An Epigram on the Reverend Mr.
 Laurence Eachard's and Bishop Gilbert Burnet's
 Histories*—

Gil's history appears to me
 Political anatomy,
 A case of skeletons well done,
 And malefactors every one.
 His sharp and strong incision pen
 Historically cuts up men,
 And does with lucid skill impart
 Their inward ails of head and heart.
 Laurence proceeds another way,
 And well dress'd figures doth display :
 His characters are all in flesh,
 Their hands are fair, their faces fresh ;
 And from his sweetning art derive
 A better scent, than when alive :
 He wax-work made to please the sons,
 Whose fathers were Gil's skeletons.

A piece of "creative criticism" quite in the modern style! In yet a different vein is Green's pleasant (or, in parts, unpleasant?) song, *The Sparrow and Diamond*:

I lately saw, what now I sing,
Fair Lucia's hand display'd ;
This finger grac'd a diamond ring,
On that a sparrow play'd.

The feather'd play-thing she carest,
She stroak'd its head and wings ;
And while it nestled on her breast,
She lisp'd the dearest things.

With chizzel bill a spark ill set
He loosen'd from the rest,
And swallow'd down to grind his meat,
The easier to digest.

She seiz'd his bill with wild affright,
Her diamond to discry ;
'Twas gone ! she sicken'd at the sight,
Moaning her bird would die.

The tongue-ty'd knocker none might use,
The curtains none undraw,
The footmen went without their shoes,
The street was laid with straw.

The doctor us'd his oily art
Of strong emetic kind,
Th' apothecary play'd his part,
And engineer'd behind.

When physic ceas'd to spend its store
To bring away the stone,
Dicky, like people given o'er,
Picks up, when let alone.

His eyes dispell'd their sickly dews,
He peck'd behind his wing ;
Lucia, recovering at the news,
Relapses for the ring.

Meanwhile within her beauteous breast
Two different passions strove ;
When av'rice ended the contest,
And triumph'd over love.

Poor little, pretty, fluttering thing,
Thy pains the sex display,
Who only to repair a ring
Could take thy life away.

Drive av'rice from your breasts, ye fair,
Monster of foulest mien,
Ye would not let it harbour there,
Could but its form be seen.

It made a virgin put on guile,
 Truth's image break her word,
 A Lucia's face forbear to smile,
 A Venus kill her bird.

I hope that there are still people in this world who like that sort of thing, for it is a pretty kind of toy.



But though Armstrong and Green and others praised water so agreeably there have been yet other bards who, not content merely with lauding alcohol, went so far as to disparage the drink that flows from the fresh springs of Helicon. Such an one was the Reverend William Broome, remembered to-day as partly responsible for Pope's *Odyssey*, but remembered for little else, I fear. There is a reference to the matter in his *Poverty and Poetry*, which I print, less for its occasional vigorous lines, than for the mournful truth with which it will ring in the ears of any of my readers who may have done a little, from time to time, in a rhyming way.

'Twas sung of old how one Amphion
 Could by his Verses tame a Lion ;
 And by his strange enchanting Tunes,
 Make Bears and Wolves dance Rigadoons :
 His Songs could call the Timber down,
 And form it into House or Town ;

But it is plain that in these times
No house is rais'd by Poets' Rhimes ;
They for themselves can only rear
A few wild Castles in the Air ;
Poor are the Brethren of the Bays,
Down from high Strains, to Ekes and Ayes.
The Muses too are Virgins yet,
And may be—till they Portions get.

Yet still the doating Rhimer dreams,
And sings of *Helicon's* bright Streams,
But *Helicon*, for all his clatter,
Yields only uninspiring Water ;
Yet ev'n athirst he sweetly sings
Of *Nectar*, and *Elysian* Springs.

What dire malignant Planet sheds,
Ye Bards, his Influence on your Heads ?
Lawyers, by endless Controversies,
Consume unthinking Clients' Purses,
As *Pharaoh's* Kine, which strange and odd is,
Devour'd the plump and well-fed Bodies.

The grave Physician, who by Physic,
Like Death, dispatches him that is sick,
Pursues a sure and thriving Trade,
Tho' Patients die, the Doctor's paid ;
Licens'd to kill, he gains a Palace,
For what another mounts the Gallows.

In shady Groves the Muses stray,
And love in flow'ry Meads to play ;

An idle Crew ! whose only Trade is
 To shine in Trifles, like our Ladies ;
 In dressing, dancing, toying, singing,
 While wiser *Pallas* thrives by spinning ;
 Thus they gain nothing to bequeath
 Their Vot'ries, but a Laurel Wreath.

But Love rewards the Bard ! the Fair
 Attend his Song, and ease his Care :
 Alas ! fond Youth, your Plea you urge ill
 Without a Jointure, tho' a *Virgil* ;
 Could you like *Phæbus* sing, in vain
 You nobly swell the lofty Strain,
 Coy *Daphne* flies, and you will find as
 Hard Hearts as her's in your *Belindas*.

But then some say you purchase Fame,
 And gain that envy'd Prize, a Name ;
 Great Recompense ! Like his who sells
 A Diamond, for Beads and Bells ;
 Will Fame be thought sufficient Bail
 To keep the Poet from the Jayl ?

Thus the brave Soldier, in the Wars,
 Gets empty Praise, and aking Scars :
 Is paid with Fame and wooden Legs,
 And starv'd, the glorious Vagrant begs.¹

¹ *Poverty and Poetry* was also printed in the posthumous quarto edition, 1771, of the collected poems of James Cawthorn. This was, of course, an error ; Cawthorn had nothing to do with these lines.

It is a very uneven poem, certainly, but hardly anyone, save the immortal Butler, ever wrote Hudibrastics which were of sustained excellence, and among Broome's lines there is a fair sprinkling of couplets that stick jauntily in the mind. Another claim of Broome's to distinction is that he was, so far as I am aware (but I am not learned in these things), the only poet to write about bottled ale in Latin verse :

Tu tamen felix ! cohibere tristes
 Tu potes curas ! *Cerealis* haustus
 Est tibi, præsens relevare diro
 Pectora luctu.

I am free to admit that, had it not been for the author's foot-note I should not myself have spotted the reference.



Another of Broome's poems, *The Rosebud : To the Right Honourable The Lady Jane Wharton*, though its theme is an old one which has been treated by his betters, has a certain "dying fall" about it, that touches something in my heart, and perhaps, too, will touch the same something in the hearts of others.

Queen of Fragrance, lovely Rose,
 The Beauties of thy Leaves disclose !
 The Winter's past, the Tempests fly,
 Soft Gales breathe gently thro' the Sky ;

The Lark sweet warbling on the Wing
Salutes the gay Return of Spring :
The silver Dews, the vernal Show'rs,
Call forth a bloomy Waste of Flow'rs ;
The joyous Fields, the shady Woods,
Are cloath'd with Green, or swell with Buds ;
Then haste thy Beauties to disclose,
Queen of Fragrance, lovely Rose !

Thou, beauteous Flow'r, a welcome Guest,
Shalt flourish on the Fair-one's Breast,
Shalt grace her Hand, or deck her Hair,
The Flow'r most sweet, the Nymph most fair ;
Breathe soft, ye Winds ! be calm, ye Skies !
Arise ye flow'ry Race, arise !
And haste thy Beauties to disclose,
Queen of Fragrance, lovely Rose !

But thou, fair Nymph, thyself survey
In this sweet Offspring of a Day ;
That Miracle of Face must fail,
Thy Charms are sweet, but Charms are frail :
Swift as the short-liv'd Flow'r they fly,
At Morn they bloom, at Evening die :
Tho' Sickness yet a while forbears,
Yet Time destroys, what Sickness spares ;
Now *Helen* lives alone in Fame
And *Cleopatra's* but a Name ;
Time must indent that heav'nly Brow
And thou must be, what they are now.

This Moral to the Fair disclose,
Queen of Fragrance, lovely Rose.

I hear the reader of this little book now beginning to mutter "Gather ye rosebuds," or "Go, lovely rose." Of course, of course. As I said, the thing has been done by Broome's betters, but Broome did it very prettily, too. Though how pretty you think his verses depends partly on how much you mind a poet's calling the spring flowers "a bloomy Waste" or an aristocratic young lady "the Fair" or "the Nymph." And, after all, why shouldn't he? "A rose by any other name"—Queen of Fragrance, for instance—"would smell as sweet." And this particular rose does, I think, smell sweetly enough.



Now let us consider another poet, John Cunningham, who, in his *Poems, Chiefly Pastoral*, 8vo, 1766 (a volume, by the way, which has for a frontispiece a most exquisite copper plate, drawn and engraved by Isaac Taylor, of whom you may read in Thomas Bewick's *Memoirs*), compared the water of Helicon with other beverages—to the disadvantage of the former. Beer was what Mr. Cunningham preferred, and he extolled the virtues of a particular local brew—a dangerous thing to do, when one remembers Mr. Belloc singing :

They brew good beer
In Haslemere,

whereas there has been no brewing in Haslemere

for twenty years or more past ! But I don't think Cunningham made any such mistake when he praised the *Newcastle Beer* in the following spirited poem :

When Fame brought the news of Great Britain's success,
And told at Olympus each Gallic defeat ;
Glad Mars sent by Mercury orders express,
To summon the deities all to a treat :
 Blithe Comus was plac'd
 To guide the gay feast,
And freely declar'd there was choice of good cheer ;
 Yet vow'd to his thinking,
 For exquisite drinking,
Their Nectar was nothing to Newcastle Beer.

The great God of war, to encourage the fun
And humour the taste of his whimsical guest,
Sent a message that moment to Moor's for a tun
Of Stingo, the stoutest, the brightest and best :
 No gods—they all swore,
 Regal'd so before,
With liquor so lively—so potent and clear :
 And each deified fellow
 Got jovially mellow,
In honour, brave boys, of our Newcastle Beer.

Apollo, perceiving his talents refine,
Repents he drank Helicon Water so long :
He bow'd, being ask'd by the musical Nine,
And gave the gay board an extempore song ;

But ere he began,
 He toss'd off his cann :
 There's nought like good liquor the fancy to clear :
 Then sang with great merit,
 The flavour and spirit,
 His godship had found in the Newcastle Beer.

'Twas Stingo like this made Alcides so bold ;
 It braced up his nerves, and enliven'd his pow'rs ;
 And his mystical club, that did wonders of old,
 Was nothing, my lads, but such liquor as ours.
 The horrible crew
 That Hercules slew,
 Were Poverty—Calumny—Trouble—and Fear :
 Such a club would you borrow,
 To drive away sorrow,
 Apply for a *quantum* of Newcastle Beer.

Ye youngsters, so diffident, languid and pale !
 Whom love, like the cholic, so rudely infests ;
 Take a cordial of this, 'twill *probatum* prevail,
 And drive the cur Cupid away from your breasts :
 Dull whining despise,
 Grow rosy and wise,
 Nor longer the jest of good fellows appear ;
 Bid adieu to your folly,
 Get drunk and be jolly,
 And smoke o'er a tankard of Newcastle Beer.

Ye fanciful folk, for whom *Physic* prescribes,
 Whom bolus and potion have harrass'd to death !

Ye wretches, whom *Law* and his ill-looking tribes,
 Have hunted about 'till you're quite out of breath !
 Here's shelter and ease,
 No craving for fees,
 No danger,—no doctor,—no bailiff is near !
 Your spirits this raises,
 It cures your diseases,
 There's freedom and health in our Newcastle Beer.

To such a poem I subscribe—æsthetically—with
 all my heart, though morally I feel it to be better
 suited to 1760 than to 1920. Cunningham was, by
 the way, not a Tynesider by birth, but was born
 in Dublin of Scotch descent. He was a strolling
 actor by profession, and finally settled in New-
 castle, where, in 1773, he died. On his tombstone
 was written the following inscription :

Here lie the Remains of

JOHN CUNNINGHAM

Of his excellence

As a pastoral Poet,

His works will remain a Monument

For Ages,

After this temporary Tribute of Esteem

Is in Dust forgotten.

He died in Newcastle, September 18, 1773.

Aged 44.

He made (as may be gathered from this epitaph) a

considerable reputation as a poet in his day, and at one time he was much besought by booksellers to go to London to become a hack-writer. He did actually do so once, but returned to Newcastle and his friends almost directly. He was indeed not suited to the writing trade, though he was a graceful and spirited writer, and he tells us of himself: "Though I scribble (but a little neither) to amuse myself, the moment I consider it as my duty, it would cease to be an amusement, and I should of consequence be weary of it. I am not enterprising, and tolerably happy in my present situation." He was a wise man. We have seen a specimen of his talent as a writer of jovial songs. He also had a pretty gift of epigram, as this may show :

A Member of the modern great
 Pass'd Sawney with his budget ;
 The Peer was in a car of state,
 The tinker forc'd to trudge it.

But Sawney shall receive the praise
 His Lordship would parade for :
 One's debtor for his dapple greys,
 And t'other's shoes are paid for.

Or this :

ON ALDERMAN W——
The History of his Life

That he was born, it cannot be deny'd,
 He eat, drank, slept, talk'd politics, and dy'd.

Which manages, in its two lines, to give a complete and vivid picture of the man—or, at least, of a man.

When, since his death, any anthologist has ever thought of quoting from Cunningham it has usually been some song or ballad, such as *Kitty Fell*, or *The Holiday Gown*, which has been selected. As several of these are easily accessible in the late Professor Arber's *The Goldsmith Anthology*, I will not quote any of them here (and incidentally, as far as I am aware, Arber was the *only* anthologist who ever included Cunningham, but there may have been others; so we will let the plural, implied at the beginning of this paragraph, stand). In his life Cunningham was most famous for his pastorals, which are said to have brought him the esteem of the great Shenstone. They sound rather jog-trot, jiggetty affairs, now, despite certain occasional lines which record impressions obviously taken from nature at first hand. The following is a favourable passage :

In the barn the tenant Cock,
Close to partlet perch'd on high,
Briskly crows, (the Shepherd's clock !)
Jocund that the morning's nigh.

Swiftly from the mountain's brow,
Shadows, nurs'd by night, retire :
And the peeping sunbeam, now,
Paints with gold the village spire.

Philomel forsakes the thorn,
Plaintive where she prates at night ;
And the Lark, to meet the morn,
Soars beyond the shepherd's sight.

From the low-roof'd cottage ridge,
See the chatt'ring Swallow spring ;
Darting through the one-arch'd bridge,
Quick she dips her dappled wing.

I could swear that the poet, when he wrote that, had some particular "one-arch'd bridge" before his mind's eye. Another achievement of Cunningham's was the composition of a long poem in the manner (or somewhat so) of Gray, *An Elegy on a Pile of Ruins*, which appeared first in Edinburgh in 1762. It was his first work, yet from its thirty-six stanzas a selection can be made to form quite a pretty, if rather disjointed, poem in the gently melancholic, *memento mori* manner. Such a selection I, with some daring, venture to present.

In the full prospect yonder hill commands,
O'er barren heaths, and cultivated plains ;
The vestige of an ancient abbey stands,
Close by a ruin'd castle's rude remains.

Half buried, there, lies many a broken bust,
And obelisk, and urn, o'erthrown by TIME ;
And many a cherub, there, descends in dust
From the rent roof, and portico sublime.

The rivulets, oft frightened at the sound
 Of fragments, tumbling from the tow'rs on high,
 Plunge to their source in secret caves profound,
 Leaving their banks and pebbly bottoms dry.

Where rev'rend shrines in Gothic grandeur stood,
 The nettle, or the noxious night-shade, spreads ;
 And ashlings, wafted from the neighbouring wood,
 Thro' the worn turrets wave their trembling heads.

There Contemplation, to the croud unknown,
 Her attitude compos'd, and aspect sweet !
 Sits musing on a monumental stone,
 And points to the MEMENTO at her feet.

Inexorably calm, with silent pace
 Here TIME has pass'd—What ruin marks his way !
 This pile, now crumbling o'er its hallow'd base,
 Turn'd not his step, nor could his course delay.

Religion rais'd her supplicating eyes
 In vain ; and Melody, her song sublime :
 In vain Philosophy, with maxims wise,
 Would touch the cold, unfeeling heart of TIME.

The relicks of a mitred saint may rest,
 Where, mould'ring in the niche, his statue stands ;
 Now nameless, as the croud that kiss'd his vest,
 And crav'd the benediction of his hands.

Near the brown arch, redoubling yonder gloom,
 The bones of an illustrious Chieftain lie ;
 As trac'd among the fragments of his tomb,
 The trophies of a broken FAME imply.

Ah ! what avails, that o'er the vassal plain,
 His rights and rich demesnes extended wide !
 That honour, and her knights, compos'd his train,
 And chivalry stood marshall'd by his side !

Tho' to the clouds his castle seem'd to climb,
 And frown'd defiance on the desp'rate foe ;
 Tho' deem'd invincible, the conqueror, TIME,
 Level'd the fabric, as the founder, low.

Where the light lyre gave many a soft'ning sound,
 Ravens and rooks, the birds of discord, dwell ;
 And where Society sat sweetly crown'd,
 Eternal Solitude has fix'd her cell.

The lizard, and the lazy lurking bat,
 Inhabit now, perhaps, the painted room,
 Where the sage matron and her maidens sat,
 Sweet-singing at the silver-working loom.

Fleet are the fleecy moments ! fly they must ;
 Not to be stay'd by masque, or midnight roar !
 Nor shall a pulse amongst that mould'ring dust
 Beat wanton at the smiles of Beauty more !

Search where Ambition rag'd, with rigour steel'd ;
 Where Slaughter, like the rapid lightning, ran ;
 And say, while mem'ry weeps the blood-stain'd field,
 Where lies the chief, and where the common man ?

Vain then are pyramids, and motto'd stones,
 And monumental trophies rais'd on high !
 For TIME confounds them with the crumbling bones,
 That mix'd in hasty graves unnotic'd lie.

Rests not, beneath the turf, the peasant's head,
 Soft as the lord's, beneath the labour'd tomb ?
 Or sleeps one colder, in his close clay bed,
 Than t'other, in the wide vault's dreary womb ?

Hither let LUXURY lead her loose-rob'd train ;
 Here flutter PRIDE, on purple-painted wings :
 And, from the moral prospect, learn—how vain
 The wish that sighs for sublunary things !

I feel no hesitation in affirming that many of
 these lines are very beautiful indeed.



There were also many other poets in the second half of the eighteenth century who, under the spell of Gray's *Elegy*, were charmed into creating the same sort of beauty. Among these was John Langhorne, best known to-day as the co-translator, with his brother William, of Plutarch's *Lives*, but also the author of many other books, including

The Fables of Flora, which was published in quarto in 1771. I hesitate to compute how many copies of these *Fables*, sometimes alone, sometimes in Langhorne's collected poems, I have seen for sale, and at an average price of perhaps sixpence. They contain much that is beautiful, though there is not one of them that is perfect all through. The best is probably *The Wallflower*, which certainly shows the influence of Gray, though the poet has shortened the metre. The poem begins :

Why loves my flower, the sweetest flower
That swells the golden breast of May,
Thrown rudely o'er this ruined tower,
To waste her solitary day ?

Why, when the mead, the spicy vale,
The grove, and genial garden call,
Will she her fragrant soul exhale,
Unheeded on the lonely wall ?

The fable is too long and too unequal in merit to quote in full, so I will give some sort of synopsis of the duller parts. The poet, out of misplaced pity for the flower, intends to uproot it from its ruin and transplant it to his garden ; but the Genius of the Ruin speaks reprovingly to him :

“ From thee be far th' ungentle deed,
The honours of the dead to spoil,
Or take the sole remaining meed,
The flower that crowns their former toil !

“ Nor deem that flower the garden’s foe,
 Or fond to grace this barren shade ;
 ’Tis NATURE tells her to bestow
 Her honours on the lonely dead.

“ For this, obedient Zephyrs bear
 Her light seeds round yon turret’s mold,
 And, undispersed by tempests there,
 They rise in vegetable gold.”

Somehow I wish Langhorne, or the Spirit of the Ruin, had not phrased that thought in just that way. However, I suppose we have got to put up with it, and he continues very well :

“ Nor shall thy wonder wake to see
 Such desert scenes distinction crave ;
 Oft have they been, and oft shall be
 Truth’s, Honour’s, Valour’s, Beauty’s grave.

“ Where longs to fall that rifted spire,
 As weary of th’ insulting air ;
 The poet’s thought, the warrior’s fire,
 The lover’s sighs are sleeping there.

“ When that too shakes the trembling ground,
 Borne down by some tempestuous sky,
 And many a slumbering cottage round
 Startles—how still their hearts will lie ! ”

The poem continues for some stanzas more but

that is the best of it, though the rest tells not ungracefully the remainder of the Genius's remonstrances—which presumably had the desired effect. Tell me sincerely, reader, are not the two last verses of my quotation very lovely ones? Professor Saintsbury has pointed out the “singular beauty” of the “Where longs to fall” stanza, and adds that “the whole poem, rococo as it may be, has a strange and delightful languor of rhythm and phrase.” Surely this praise, from the greatest living critic of poetry, will induce a few people to buy some of these sixpenny Langhorne and, at any rate, to dip into them.

That last sentence sounds as if I had finished with Dr. Langhorne, but I have not. He is a poet of occasional beauties, some of which seem like the faint and distant rumbling of the coming Wordsworthian storm. Such a one is this, of the wild rose :

Yet, lovely flower, I find in thee
Wild sweetness which no words express,
And charms in thy simplicity,
That dwell not in the pride of dress.

Langhorne was a native of Westmoreland (though he became parson of a south-country parish), and, like Wordsworth, he praised the beauties of the Lake District; his *Ode to the River Eden* is pretty enough, and so is this :

A FAREWELL HYMN

To the Valley of Irwan

Farewell the fields of Irwan's vale,
 My infant years where Fancy led ;
 And sooth'd me with the western gale,
 Her wild dreams waving round my head,
 While the blythe blackbird told his tale.
 Farewell the fields of Irwan's vale !

The primrose on the valley's side,
 The green thyme on the mountain's head,
 The wanton rose, the daisy pied,
 The wilding's blossom blushing red ;
 No longer I their sweets inhale.
 Farewell the fields of Irwan's vale !

How oft, within yon vacant shade,
 Has ev'ning clos'd my careless eye !
 How oft, along those banks, I've stray'd,
 And watch'd the wave that wander'd by !
 Full long their loss shall I bewail.
 Farewell the fields of Irwan's vale !

Yet still, within yon vacant grove,
 To mark the close of parting day ;
 Along yon flow'ry banks to rove,
 And watch the wave that winds away ;
 Fair Fancy sure shall never fail,
 Though far from these, and Irwan's vale.

My reader may here accuse me of inconsistency
 in the matter of printing *es* or apostrophes in past

participles and in such words as “flower” (or “flow’r”): the discrepancy is due to my indolence, I fear, for I copy the poems in this little book as they are before me; where I have an edition with the author’s original spelling and punctuation in my study, I copy that. In other cases I take any edition I happen to have—though I suppose that, if I were conscientious, I should go to the British Museum, armed with a reader’s ticket, and copy all my quotations from the first editions; only really, dear reader, I cannot be bothered (or bother’d). In the particular case of Langhorne the quotations from *The Fables of Flora* are copied from the fifth quarto edition, 1773, and the others from the Langhorne volume of *Cooke’s Pocket Edition of the Original and Complete Works of Select British Poets, or Entertaining Poetical Library, containing the Most Esteemed Poetic Productions Superbly Embellished*, 12mo, 1798. So there you are. But to resume: Langhorne’s gift of fluent and polished verse naturally lent itself to translation, and before I leave him, to pass to some other singer, I want to quote two examples of his work in this kind. The first is from Catullus, and is very gracefully done:

Lesbia, live to love and pleasure,
 Careless what the grave may say:
 When each moment is a treasure,
 Why should lovers lose a day?

Setting suns shall rise in glory,
But when little life is o'er,
There's an end to all the story :
We shall sleep and wake no more.

Give me then a thousand kisses,
Twice ten thousand more bestow,
Till the sum of boundless blisses
Neither we nor envy know.

The second is from *Sonnet 238* of Petrarch. The rendering is perhaps not very smooth at first (the poor rhyme of "shade" and "spread" and the -ade -ale assonancies, mar it), but it reaches at the end a certain exaltation and sublimity, which testify to Langhorne's skill, in that he was able to catch from his model a mood greater than his own, and transplant it even into the idiom of his own day.

Wail'd the sweet warbler to the lonely shade ;
Trembled the green leaf to the summer gale ;
Fell the fair stream in murmurs down the dale,
Its banks, its flowery banks with verdure spread,
Where, by the charm of pensive Fancy led,
All as I fram'd the love-lamenting tale,
Came the dear object whom I still bewail,
Came from the regions of the cheerless dead ;
"And why," she cry'd, "untimely wilt thou die ?
Ah why, for pity, shall those mournful tears

Start in wild sorrow from that languid eye ?
 Cherish no more those visionary fears,
 For me, who range yon light-invested sky !
 For me, who triumph in eternal years !”



With that I had really intended to finish with our reverend doctor, but there suddenly comes to my mind a story, told by his biographer (whoever he may have been, and I suppose I ought to know) in Cook's edition. I cannot better fill a page of this anthology (if that is what it is) than by printing it in all the glory of its original phraseology.

“ During his residence, in the summer of 1773, at Weston-super-Mare, in Somersetshire, whither he went for the benefit of the sea air, the ingenious Miss Hannah More resided, for the same salutary purpose, at Uphill, a mile from Weston. Meeting the female bard, one day, upon the sea-shore, Langhorne wrote, with the end of his stick upon the sand, the following impromptu :

“ ‘ Along the shore
 Walk'd Hannah More ;—
 Waves, let this record last :
 Sooner shall ye,
 Proud earth and sea,
 Than what *she* writes be past.’ ”

The lady returned the compliment by scratching

underneath, with her whip, with the same facility of genius :

“ ‘Some firmer basis, polish’d Langhorne, choose,
To write the dictates of thy charming muse ;
Her strains in solid characters rehearse,
And be thy tablet lasting as thy verse.’ ”

The Doctor, highly pleased with this effusion of the lady’s muse, praised her wit, and copied the lines, which he presented to her, at a house near the sea, where they adjourned, and she afterwards wrote under as follows : ‘ ’ ” Some dozen or fifteen couplets with which I will not trouble the reader. It seems sacrilege even to copy (as I have just done) the narration of this affecting incident with a steel pen. A quill, the most glossy of feather, the most shrill of voice, is the only instrument wherewith one might, with just reverence, dare to record this touching occurrence.



Richard Gifford was another poet who, in his anonymous poem *Contemplation*, 1753 (the only verse he ever published), was moved to write some pretty lines by the recollection of Gray’s *Elegy*, which had appeared two years earlier. He was a man of no particular note ; born in 1725 in Shropshire, he was at Balliol from 1744 to 1748, and afterwards lived the life of a country parson

somewhat hampered by ill-health ; he died in 1807 at Duffield in Derbyshire. His debt to Gray is quite obvious, both in the matter and manner of his only poem, and he even refers¹ directly to his great model : the following four stanzas will illustrate these points :

If solemn Scenes delight, as oft the Muse
Is wrapt in Meditation, then she strays
Thro' silent Church-yards, where the sable Yews
Spread kindred Gloom, and holy Musings raise.

.

And there, unmark'd the Grave ! her Bones are laid ;
Yet if that Earth shall to her Soul restore
The once fair Limbs of a Plebeian Maid,
The Urn, the Pyramid can do no more.

Thy Fate, sweet Innocence, far other Note
Had sung, if the sad Tale had reach'd the Swain,
Who 'mid the Graves erst touch'd his Doric Oat,
And wept Mortality in such a strain,

That Death relenting, were his savage Ear
Attun'd to Numbers, had a while restrain'd
His Lust of Slaughter ; shed the pitying Tear,
And dropt the Dart with human Gore distain'd.

¹ I think this must be the first printed reference to Gray in contemporary verse. It is certainly earlier than Mason's reference in his ode *To a Friend* (1756), though Mason mentions Gray by name, and Gifford does not. Richard West preceded both, in composition, but not in publication.

I have quoted these verses rather archæologically than otherwise, for, admittedly, they show that Gifford, in some ways also, did *not* resemble Gray : a fact which the last line of the following passage also demonstrates :

Bred to the Toil of Life, her humble Mind
Had heard unmov'd the Pleasures of the Great,
Nor once at what she was had e'er repin'd,
Or envious wish'd to change her lowly State.

'Wak'd with the Dawn, she brush'd the silver Dew
With eager Steps along the silent Vale,
Then from the Kine her well-taught Fingers drew
The bounteous Blessings of the Milking-pail.

Great heavens ! what a long-winded way of saying "milk" ! The fact, of course, is plain that Gifford was a not very accomplished writer of verse ; his poem is full of awkwardnesses and slight obscurities ; yet in some passages he was able to draw charming enough pictures of country life, as seen through rather romantic spectacles, and his poem is good enough to have been admired and quoted (or rather, misquoted) by Dr. Johnson.

Ev'n from the straw-roof'd Cott the Note of Joy
Flows full and frequent, as the Village-Fair,
Whose little Wants the busy Hour employ,
Chanting some rural Ditty sooths her Care.

Verse softens Toil, however rude the Sound ;
 She feels no biting Pang the while she Sings ;
 Nor, as she turns the giddy Wheel around,
 Revolves the sad Vicissitude of things.

O here to wander all the smiling Day,
 And view the plodding Rustic's envied Lot !
 Where thro' the Round of Prospect all is gay,
 Each Passion husht, and ev'ry Care forgot !

To sit beside the Stream, whose Silver Flood
 With gentle Murmurs lulls to soft Repose !
 To hear the merry Songster of the Wood,
 And laugh with real Joy at fancied Woes !

To count the frisking Lambs ! to tread the Shade
 That Echo haunts, who, when the love-sick Swain
 Dwells on the Coldness of some cruel Maid,
 Touch'd with his Woes sighs o'er the piteous Strain.

There, as the Horn along the silent Lake
 'Wakes dulcet Harmony, (while all around
 Their sedgy Locks the raptur'd Naiads shake)
 Still sweeter from yon Grove returns the Sound.

Ye Sons of Mirth, who love the simple Tale
 The Nurse invents to cheat the tedious Night,
 Or the grey Cocker hums o'er festive Ale,
 Of Goblin bloody, or of mirthful Sprite ;

O come ! here hoary-lock'd Tradition tells
 Of wayward Hags in tatter'd Remnants drest,
 Of unblest Wizards and their binding Spells,
 Of virtuous Knights confin'd and Maids distrest,

Of sportive Elves, who crouch in Bells of Flow'rs,
 'Till Sleep around his gentle Poppies shed,
 Then, 'till the Morn bring on the roseate Hours,
 Guard from each threat'ning Ill the Virgin's Bed ;

Or haply by the Flame-rob'd Glow-worm's Light
 They trip, unseen, the light fantastic Round ;
 Yet Morn displays the jocund Feats of Night,
 And Fairy Ringlets mark the hallow'd Ground.

O come ! here oft the sheeted Ghost appears,
 When Ev'ning's Shades embrown the silent Mead,
 And, rais'd by many a pale-eyed Milkmaid's Fears,
 Waves in the Bough, or quivers in the Reed.

For this the Infant-pratlers of the Farm
 Leave with the Sun their little Revelry,
 And, list'ning thoughtful to the nightly Charm
 Of ghostly Tale, cling round their Mother's Knee.

“ O come ! My *Lucy* ! Here are constant Streams
 Of Joy, and such as Grandeur never knows ;
 Our Morning-labours, and our Ev'ning-dreams
 Were ill-exchang'd for Pomp, and Midnight-shows.

“Tho’ gay the View from yonder Mountain’s Brow,
 There rage the Storms, and there the Whirl-winds ride;
 The quiet Life is in the Vale below,
 And here soft Peace and sweet Content abide.”

Gifford’s pictures of rural life are not hardly realistic, or at least they leave out all that the hard realist would put in. Yet he is not dull and not altogether untruthful; he is one of the soft realists—to attempt to coin a phrase that has a very definite place waiting for it in the classification of artists—one of those who show the pleasant parts of what they are describing, and who, in their way, are just as faithful to nature as those who give us nothing but the ugly parts. Both are artists of an imperfect kind, yet the gloomy ones seem to have had all the praise lately. But why should only the very great be allowed to summon us pleasant phantoms, while any second-rater has full licence to fill our bookshelves with demons and devils—and be praised for it? I for one take this opportunity of praising the minor and agreeable Richard Gifford. *Contemplation* was published by Dodsley in one of his prettiest quarto pamphlets, ending with a most engaging woodcut of a gentleman sitting under a tree fishing, while what appear to be men on horseback (but may only be tufts of grass—it is sometimes so hard to be certain) pass under his fishing-rod. The cut is perhaps a little crude (though it has elegant

scrollwork round it) but the book is obviously one which is "an ornament to any gentleman's library"; and yet its market value to-day is probably about half a crown.



One of the authors whose books, if you potter about bookstalls and bookshops in search of old poetry, you will find most frequently, and at truly exiguous prices, is Mrs. Charlotte Smith, who published her *Elegiac Sonnets* in 1784 and a second volume of them in 1797. She was also the author of numerous novels and other works, written (as indeed so much literature, of all grades of merit, has been written) to make money—which was sorely needed to cope with the necessities of a large family and a wasteful husband. To read her sonnets one would imagine that she was continually plunged in the deepest gloom, but the *Dictionary of National Biography*, that useful *brochure*, speaks of "her cheerful temperament," which is an added proof of the fact that you can seldom know a minor writer by his or her works. As a poetess she was of the sort which is certain to be immensely popular in its own day, but is very lucky if it gets any posthumous fame at all. Her mannerisms—the continual apostrophising and personification, the self-conscious enjoyment of misery—were those which were commonplaces of almost all the poets of her time, and, far from

offending the ears of her contemporaries, even titillated them. To-day we find these mannerisms out of fashion and tedious. Yet Mrs. Smith had certain gifts as a poetess; she was often mellifluous, and she had a real love of nature and country sights—a quality which charms us whenever and wherever we meet it; sometimes she relieves an otherwise dull poem with a sudden beautiful line, as when she calls the nightingale—

The gentle bird who sings of pity best.

She obviously, too, had a great appreciation of the best poetry, and her verses are full of appropriations (all honourably acknowledged in notes) from Shakespeare, Milton, Gray, Pope, Collins, and others. She had, also, the gift of paying compliments gracefully—at least, I suppose it is a gift; at any rate, if you are going to flatter a peer it seems to me to be a good thing to be able to do it as well as Charlotte Smith did in her *Sonnet 18: To the Earl of Egremont*:

Wyndham! 'tis not thy blood, tho' pure it runs
Thro' a long line of glorious ancestry,
Percys and Seymours, Britain's boasted sons,
Who trust the honors of their race to thee:

'Tis not thy splendid domes, where science loves
To touch the canvas, and the bust to raise;
Thy rich domains, fair fields, and spreading groves;
'Tis not all these the Muse delights to praise!

In birth and wealth and honors, great thou art !
 But nobler, in thy independent mind ;
 And in that liberal hand and feeling heart
 Given thee by Heaven—a blessing to mankind !
 Unworthy oft may titled fortune be ;
 A soul like thine—is true nobility !

The canvas was touched, of course, by Turner, Haydon, and Flaxman, and the bust raised by Nollekens, in the splendid domes of Petworth. It is odd, by the way, how fond the poets of the later eighteenth century were of the word “ bust,” a fondness of which by now my reader may almost have begun to weary. And I remember (if I may for an instant digress) that when, as a very small boy, I first read Gray’s *Elegy* (my ordinary reading at that time being chiefly comic papers) I could only imagine that his “ animated bust ” was some obscure reference to the glories of bank holiday. But to return more nearly to Mrs. Smith—the sonnet to Egremont is not really typical of her work : at her best she has a good deal more of the poet in her than that, and often she played ingenious and original (I think) experiments with the sonnet form. Here are more typical, perhaps more favourable, examples of her powers :

TO FANCY

Thee, Queen of Shadows ! shall I still invoke,
 Still love the scenes thy sportive pencil drew,
 When on mine eyes the early radiance broke,
 Which shew’d the beauteous, rather than the true !

Alas ! long since, those glowing tints are dead,
 And now 'tis thine in darkest hues to dress
 The spot where pale Experience hangs her head
 O'er the sad grave of murder'd Happiness !
 Thro' thy false medium then, no longer view'd,
 May fancied pain and fancied pleasure fly,
 And I, as from me all my dreams depart,
 Be to my wayward destiny subdued ;
 Nor seek perfection with a poet's eye,
 Nor suffer anguish with a poet's heart.

SONNET 36

Should the lone Wanderer, fainting on his way,
 Rest for a moment of the sultry hours,
 And tho' his path thro' thorns and roughness lay,
 Pluck the wild rose, or woodbine's gadding flowers ;
 Weaving gay wreaths, beneath some sheltering tree,
 The sense of sorrow he awhile may lose ;
 So have I sought thy flowers, fair Poesy !
 So charm'd my way, with Friendship and the Muse.
 But darker now grows life's unhappy day,
 Dark, with new clouds of evil yet to come,
 Her pencil sickening Fancy throws away ;
 And weary Hope reclines upon the Tomb,
 And points my wishes to that tranquil shore,
 Where the pale spectre Care pursues no more.

TO SPRING

Again the wood, and long with-drawing vale,
 In many a tint of tender green are drest,
 Where the young leaves unfolding scarce conceal
 Beneath their early shade the half-form'd nest

Of finch or wood-lark ; and the primrose pale,
And lavish cowslip, wildly scatter'd round,
Give their sweet spirits to the sighing gale.
Ah ! season of delight ! could aught be found
To soothe awhile the tortur'd bosom's pain,
Of Sorrow's rankling shaft to ease the wound,
And bring life's first delusions once again,
'Twere surely found in thee ! Thy prospect fair,
Thy sounds of harmony, thy balmy air,
Have power to cure all sadness—but despair.

The last shows one of the tricks Mrs. Smith could play with the form ; and each one of these sonnets, I think, is something more than what my grandfather used to call “an affecting copy of verses.” The pose of deep despair is possibly a little annoying, if you happen to be a person who dislikes tragedies which need not, perhaps, be read quite so seriously as they are written ; but there is real felicity and melody of diction and of rhythm in these poems. There is, too, a pleasant talent for description, and I venture to maintain that they do not deserve entirely to be forgotten. I ought to add that our poetess's punctuation has annoyed me so much that I have, in the worst instances, altered it to my own better liking. Charlotte Smith was one of the many poets who have loved and sung her native county of Sussex ; the Arun is the stream that flows through her verses. She died, however, in 1806 at Tilford, in Surrey, and one hopes that the sound of the Wey,

which runs so prettily through that village, was as grateful to her ears, in the last months of her uneasy life, as ever was that of her own beloved "Aruna."

Having devoted the last few pages of this little book to one lady, I now hunt round my bookshelves for another to succeed her. But without much success, I fear, for I do not seem to light on one that hits exactly my present fancy. Shall I, perhaps, write about Mary Robinson, the mistress of the prince who became George IV? I rather doubt it; she was capable of writing, in *Sappho and Phaon in a Series of Legitimate Sonnets* (1796), a description of the Temple of Chastity, wherein she tells us that—

Ambrosial flow'rs
Twining round icicles, in columns rise,

and, of the floor of that remarkable building, that it was—

Studded with tear-drops petrified by scorn!

So I don't think we will waste much time over her. And, quite frankly, on turning to another lady, Mrs. Elisabeth Rowe, I find her biographer (her brother-in-law, Theophilus Rowe, who in 1739 edited her works) more amusing than her poems. This gentleman tells us, for instance, that "of Mrs. Rowe's two sisters, one died

in childhood, the other survived to her twentieth year, a lovely concurrent in the race of virtue and glory." And what a pleasant anthology, by the way, might be made from the too elegant *gaucheries* of the hack writers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries! But to return to Mrs. Rowe, I suppose it is my fault that I do not admire her poems, for my betters—Prior (who wanted to marry her) and Pope among them—have done so. Yet somehow I find her very religious verses—except in tiny doses—unreadable. Her last-published poem (1736; she died in 1737, aged sixty-two) was *The History of Joseph, in Ten Books*; I shall not reprint it here. Her elegy on her husband, who died in 1715, was much admired in its day, and was probably sincerely written, though it does not now read like it, except possibly in the lines:

Whate'er to such superior worth was due,
 Whate'er excess the fondest passion knew,
 I felt for thee, dear youth; my joy, my care,
 My pray'rs themselves were thine, and only where
 Thou wast concern'd, my virtue was sincere.
 Whene'er I begg'd for blessings on thy head,
 Nothing was cold, or formal, that I said;
 My warmest vows to heav'n were made for thee,
 And love still mingled with my piety.

There is, it seems to me, just a touch of human grief and feeling in those lines; but I cannot say

so much for most of Mrs. Rowe's productions, though I confess I have not waded through them all, and, of course, they may contain unexpected pearls. The only thing of this lady's which I can bring myself to print is the quite jolly little set of verses, *A Laplander's Song to his Mistress* :

Shine out, resplendent God of day,
On my fair *Orramoor* ;
Her charms thy most propitious ray,
And kindest looks allure.

In mountain, vale, or gloomy grove,
I'd climb the tallest tree,
Could I from thence my absent love,
My charming rover see.

I'd venture on a rising cloud,
Aloft in yielding air ;
From that exalted station proud,
To view the smiling fair.

Should she in some sequester'd bow'r,
Among the branches hide,
I'd tear off ev'ry leaf and flow'r,
Till there she was descry'd.

From ev'ry bird I'd steal a wing
To *Orramoor* to fly ;
And urg'd by love, would swiftly spring
Along the lightsome sky.

Return, and bless me with thy charms,
 While yet the sun displays
 His fairest beams, and kindly warms
 Us with his vital rays.

Return before the light be gone,
 In which thou shouldst appear ;
 Unwelcome night is hast'ning on
 To darken half the year.

In vain, relentless maid, in vain,
 Thou dost a youth forsake,
 Whose love shall quickly o'er the plain
 Thy savage flight o'ertake.

Should bars of steel my passage stay,
 They could not thee secure :
 I'd through enchantments find a way
 To seize my *Orramoor*.

That, I think, is a perky, perhaps almost lyrical, little thing. Yet it shows once more how conventional Mrs. Rowe could make even an unusual subject, and I don't feel like writing any more about her just now.



A DIALOGUE

Says *Body* to *Mind*, 'Tis amazing to see,
 We're so nearly related yet never agree,
 But lead a most wrangling, strange Sort of a Life,
 As great Plagues to each other as Husband and Wife.

The Fault's all your own, who with flagrant Oppression,
Encroach ev'ry Day on my lawful Possession.

The best Room in my House you have seiz'd for your
own,

And turn'd the whole Tenement quite upside down,
While you hourly call in a disorderly Crew

Of vagabond Rogues, who have nothing to do

But to run in and out, hurry scurry, and keep

Such a horrible Uproar, I can't get to sleep.

There's my Kitchen sometimes is as empty as Sound,

I call for my Servants, not one's to be found :

They all are sent out on your Ladyship's Errand,

To fetch some more riotous Guests in, I warrant !

And since Things are growing, I see, worse and worse,

I'm determin'd to force you to alter your Course.

Poor *Mind*, who heard all with extreme Moderation,
Thought it now Time to speak, and make her Allega-
tion.

'Tis I, that, methinks, have most Cause to complain,
Who am cramped and confin'd like a Slave in a Chain.

I did but step out, on some weighty Affairs,

To visit, last Night, my good Friends in the Stars,

When, before I was got half as high as the Moon,

You dispatched *Pain* and *Langour* to hurry me down ;

Vi et Armis they seiz'd me, in Midst of my Flight,

And shut me in Caverns as dark as the Night.

'Twas no more, reply'd *Body*, than what you deserv'd.

While you rambled Abroad, I at Home was half starv'd :

And, unless I had closely confin'd you in Hold,

You had left me to perish with Hunger and Cold.

I've a Friend, answers *Mind*, who, tho' slow, is yet sure,
 And, will rid me, at last, of your insolent Pow'r :
 Will knock down your mud Walls, the whole Fabric
 demolish,
 And at once your strong Holds and my Slav'ry abolish :
 And while in the Dust your dull Ruins decay,
 I shall snap off my Chains and fly freely away.

Now that is a better example of the Female Muse ! Which said Muse was on this occasion speaking through the pen of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, of whom Dr. Johnson said, "My old friend, Mrs. Carter, could make a pudding as well as translate Epictetus from the Greek, and work a handkerchief as well as compose a poem." I don't know what her handkerchiefs were like, but—rest her soul—her poems were not very good, though the above *Dialogue* is so, I think, and has, for all its humorous form, something really spiritual and poetical in it. Yet ordinarily her verse had little enough to do with her "good friends in the stars." A most remarkable character must this old spinster lady (she was merely Mrs. from age and respectability) have been who, though originally slow at learning, yet managed to know Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, Italian, Spanish, and German. So hard did she work as a young girl, and so late at night did she read, that she was forced to keep herself awake by chewing green tea and taking snuff ; which vigorous discipline caused her to suffer from headaches in

later life. However, she managed to live from 1717 to 1806—a good long span, in the course of which she knew most of those of her contemporaries who were worth knowing. She published her anonymous *Poems upon Particular Occasions* in quarto in 1738, and in 1762 her octavo *Poems on Several Occasions*. Do not, dear reader, I pray you, mix them up, for they contain only two poems in common. The second volume was a popular one and ran through several editions, of which I am happy enough to possess two, worth, monetarily, about threepence each. And with Mrs. Carter we will take our leave, for the moment at least, of the Female Muse.



The reader may now—if he is reading this book straight through, which I trust he is not, as it is not written to be read so—feel that one or two of the fish I have caught recently are rather small ones, almost “tiddlers,” in fact. Still, fishing for tiddlers is a time-honoured and absorbing sport, and I have deliberately excluded from the scope of this little anthology (or whatever it may be) any poet with pretensions to greatness. It has, however, always been in my mind to make one exception, and perhaps this is the moment. John Gay was certainly a great writer, perhaps even a great poet, and of his famous works I shall here say nothing; but there are certain minor and early

works of his which are habitually left unread, and either uncommmented, or miscommmented, upon, by the critics. The first of these works is *Wine*, a poem in blank verse, with which, in May 1708, Gay commenced poet, before the world, at any rate. Apparently he did not, in after years, think very much of this poem, for he did not include it in his quarto *Poems on Several Occasions* of 1720. In this he showed discretion, for *Wine*, obviously inspired by the *Cider* of John Philips, whose Muse nevertheless he refers to as

Languid and faint, and on damp wing immersed
In acid juice, in vain attempts to rise—

a depressing enough picture—is on the whole dull ; and blank verse never suited Gay's talent, which was always that of the song-writer, or tale-teller, or gossip in verse, ever the better for having his good, clear-cut English pointed with rhyme. It does, however, contain one or two well-observed and well-recorded pictures of contemporary life, which give a foretaste of one of the special charms and values of the poet's best work. Such a one is the sketch of the landlady of a London inn :

Nigh to the stairs' ascent, in regal port,
Sits a majestic dame, whose looks denounce
Command and sov'reignty, with haughty air,
And studied mien, in semi-circ'lar throne
Enclosed, she deals around her dread commands ;
Behind her (dazzling sight !) in order ranged,

Pile above pile, crystalline vessels shine ;
 Attendant slaves with eager strides advance,
 And, after homage paid, bawl out aloud
 Words unintelligible, noise confused :
 She knows the jargon sounds, and straight describes,
 In characters mysterious, words obscure ;
 More legible are Algebraic signs,
 Or mystic figures by magicians drawn,
 When they involve th' infernal Spirits' aid.

This is very well, it will be admitted. It brings a picture before us, the truth of which we can all recognise. But it is, I think, too drawn out, and lacks that last finish, that exquisite point, to which the later Gay would have rhymed it. For the Muse which wrote *Wine* may, indeed, as Gay claimed, have "drawn Miltonic air," but it exhaled very un-Miltonic blank verse. Gay, by the way, was always a supporter of the theory (I believe it a worthless one) that wine is a great aider and abettor to poetical composition—even if it is not necessary to it. He certainly agreed with the following epigram—if he happened to know it, of course :

BACCHUS AND APOLLO

The thigh-borne bastard of the thund'ring *Joue*,
 (When men's inventions are of wit most hollow)
 He with his spitefull juice their sprites doth mooue,
 Unto th' harmonious musicke of *Apollo* :
 And in a word, I would have all men know it,
 He must drinke wine, that means to be a Poet.

That was written by John Taylor, the water-poet, which title was bestowed upon him not because he drank water (perhaps he would then have been a somewhat better poet), but because, in pursuance of his calling as a Thames waterman, he rowed upon it.

Row on (good Water-man) and looke back still,
(Thus as thou dost) upon the Muses' Hill.

So wrote to him Dekker, and so may we echo and return to John Gay.



In 1711 Gay wrote his *Epistle on a Miscellany of Poems to Bernard Lintott*, the publisher, who, naturally, prefixed it to his *Miscellany* of May 1712. The poem was sent in manuscript to Pope, whose vanity cannot have been ill-pleased with the lines, towards the close of the poem, in which he is referred to directly :

When Pope's harmonious muse with pleasure roves
Amidst the plains, the murmuring streams and groves,
Attentive Echo, pleas'd to hear his songs,
Thro' the glad shade each warbling note prolongs ;
His various numbers charm our ravish'd ears,
His steady judgment far out-shoots his years,
And early in the youth the god appears.

Pope was three years Gay's junior, and both were as yet young men, so the praise of these lines has

in reality more of genuineness in it than we should be inclined to ascribe to it, looking at it from a distance, and considering the respective positions which the two poets afterwards came to occupy in English letters. Gay's poem is all through not bad, as such things go (and sometimes they go very pleasantly indeed), and the end is lively enough :

From these successful bards collect thy strains,
 And praise with profit shall reward thy pains :
 Then, while calves-leather binding bears the sway,
 And sheep-skin to its sleeker gloss gives way ;
 While neat old Elzevir is reckon'd better
 Than Pirate Hills' brown sheets and scurvy letter ;
 While print admirers careful Aldus choose
 Before John Morphew, or the weekly news :
 So long shall live thy praise in books of fame,
 And Tonson yield to Lintott's lofty name.

It is all very neat and just—except maybe the last line at the expense of Tonson, which was perhaps the cause of Tonson's dunning the poet a bit in time to come—and one rejoices to see him having a slap back at Hills, who had produced a pirated edition of *Wine*—a piracy which, by the way, is some indication that that poem, despite what Gay later thought of it, and what recent critics have said of it, was considered in its day not wholly without merit.



Gay's next poem *Rural Sports*, which appeared in 1713, was the first really remarkable work published by him, though it is not, taken as a whole, a first-rate production. In construction it is patchy and lacking in any sense of proportion—as, indeed, are all of Gay's longer poems. But it has certain very high qualities, and it contains what was foreshadowed in one or two passages of *Wine*, really brilliant and exactly observed and phrased pictures of the life of the time, and especially—as was natural from the subject—of country life. Gay was, indeed, very unlike his contemporaries, or many of them, in his exact and first-hand knowledge of rural scenes and conditions—a knowledge which enabled him to write so remarkable a series of pastorals as *The Shepherd's Week*—even though Swift did accuse him (unjustly, I feel sure) of not knowing wheat when he saw it. In the most unexpected corners of Gay's work we keep stumbling across images, pictures of some country sight, at which we can only exclaim, "Gay saw that!" The fishing scenes in this poem are perhaps the best things, and we are throughout them constantly being amazed at the justness of the word used, especially if we have ever been fishing. I choose a few lines to illustrate what I mean :

Cast on the bank, he dies with gasping pains,
And *trickling* blood his silver mail distains.

.

Upon the *curling* surface let it *glide*,
 With nat'ral motion from thy hand supplied,
 Against the stream now let it gently *play*,
 Now in the rapid eddy *roll* away.

The italics are mine. Would not a worse poet of the period have spoken of "horrid blood" instead of using Gay's exact phraseology? And who but a real observer, who had watched the movements of a fly in various kinds of water, would have got the verbs "glide," "play," and "roll"—especially the last—in their right places? As an example of a more sustained flight of Gay's rural muse let me quote this—surely one of the best bits of fishing literature in English:

When a brisk gale against the current blows,
 And all the wat'ry plain in wrinkles flows,
 Then let the fisherman his art repeat,
 Where bubbling eddies favour the deceit.
 If an enormous salmon chance to spy
 The wanton errors of the floating fly,
 He lifts his silver gills above the flood,
 And greedily sucks in th' unfaithful food;
 Then downward plunges with the fraudulent prey,
 And bears with joy the little spoil away;
 Soon in smart pain he feels the dire mistake,
 Lashes the wave, and beats the foaming lake,
 With sudden rage he now aloft appears,
 And in his eye convulsive anguish bears;
 And now again, impatient of the wound,
 He rolls and wreathes his shining body round;

Then headlong shoots beneath the dashing tide,
 The trembling fins the boiling wave divide ;
 Now hope exalts the fisher's beating heart,
 Now he turns pale, and fears his dubious art ;
 He views the tumbling fish with longing eyes,
 While the line stretches with th' unwieldy prize ;
 Each motion humours with his steady hands,
 And one slight hair the mighty bulk commands :
 Till tired at last, despoil'd of all his strength,
 The game athwart the stream unfolds his length.
 He now, with pleasure, views the gasping prize
 Gnash his sharp teeth, and roll his bloodshot eyes ;
 Then draws him to the shore, with artful care,
 And lifts his nostrils in the sick'ning air :
 Upon the burthen'd stream he floating lies,
 Stretches his quivering fins, and gasping dies.

That seems to me a masterpiece of description, every detail perfect, and *observed from nature*, with the possible exception of one line—the one about the convulsive anguish in the salmon's eye. Can one see the look in a fish's eye as it jumps ? I feel doubtful. Yet, even allowing for this one blemish, and an occasional blurring of the clarity of the narrative by making "he" refer to both the fisher and the fish, the passage is fine and finely sustained. And I cannot admit that a poem which contains it can be labelled as *toujours bien, jamais mieux*, as *Rural Sports* has been described by a very distinguished critic.

That is nearly all I have to say about John Gay here, for, after *Rural Sports*, his poems are either too hopelessly bad (as *The Fan*) or too justly famous (as *The Shepherd's Week* and the *Fables*) for inclusion in this little book of mine. I do, however, before I say good-bye to this poet, want to draw attention to one little song of his, which seems to me to have a dying fall, quite in the manner—or perhaps I should say almost so—of an earlier century, and strikingly unlike anything else Gay, or, as far as I am aware, any of his contemporaries ever wrote. It comes from *Polly*, the banned sequel to *The Beggar's Opera*.

Sleep, O Sleep,
With thy rod of incantation,
Charm my imagination,
Then, only then, I cease to weep.

By thy power,
The virgin by time o'ertaken,
For years forlorn, forsaken,
Enjoys the happy hour.

What's to sleep ?
'Tis a visionary blessing ;
A dream that's past expressing,
Our utmost wish possessing ;
So may I always keep.

I cannot help feeling that that little song has much

in it of the loveliness of such a thing as *Weep you no more, Sad Fountains*, of which Gay was almost certainly ignorant, and that it has a very beautiful and unusual cadence for an eighteenth-century poem. If I had my way, it should be in every anthology of English lyrics.



Gay's *Rural Sports* seems to lead naturally to another poem, which, had not the title already been appropriated, might fitly have been called by it. As things were, however, this poem was named *Hounslow Heath*, and its author was the Reverend Wetenhall Wilkes, M.A., minister of the chapel at Hounslow. When the first edition of the poem appeared I do not know, but the second edition, dedicated to Archibald, third Duke of Argyle, is dated November 14, 1748. This edition was privately reprinted in 1870 by John Camden Hotten, under the editorship of William Pinkerton, F.S.A., in aid of the funds of the restoration of Hounslow Church. The reprint was limited to one hundred copies, and it was one of these, picked up only the other day in a bookshop, that introduced Wilkes to me. He is not mentioned in *The Dictionary of National Biography*, and all I know of his life is the very scanty information which Pinkerton was able to discover. He was probably an Irishman, and probably had his university education at Dublin;

his *An Essay on the Existence of a God* was published in Belfast in 1730, and about that time he lived in Carrickfergus. When he came to Hounslow I do not know, but he left there in April 1750, being preferred to the Rectory of South Summer Court, in Lincolnshire, where he died on March 25, 1751, aged about fifty. He appears to have been the author of one or two prose pieces and of two poems, *Rural Felicity compared with Public Life: A Doric Poem* and *The Chase*, "a poem subjoined to an Essay, entitled, *The Pleasures and Advantages of Female Literature*, printed in London, 1741, and to be sold by Messrs. Manby & Cox on Ludgate Hill." I regret that I have read neither of these poems, though perhaps I may summon enough energy to hunt them up and read them before I get this book of mine finished. However, I hold out no promises; so let us consider *Hounslow Heath*, which I have read. There is really only one thing that need attract any reader's attention to this poem, and that is that the reverend author appears to have known a good deal about hunting. Without the descriptions of hare-hunting and coursing, fox-hunting and stag-hunting, *Hounslow Heath* would be a very uninteresting bit of doggerel. But these hunting descriptions are very lively and actual, and crammed full of technical terms, which, as so many modern authors have discovered, have an odd way of bringing reality on the printed page.

I propose now to "lift" bodily from Wilkes's poem the passage which describes first hunting the hare and then the fox.

Proceed, my muse, the generous task pursue,
From *Crantford-Field* take thy unbounded view ;
In graphic lays declare what pleasures reign,
And what diversions crowd the lively scene !

Here, where the rosy dawn brings on the day,
And blended sweets appear on foliage gay,
(Ere *Sol* or *Myra* leave their balmy bed,
While pleasing dreams amuse each female's head ;
While o'er their pillows soft chimeras creep,
And make them smile at conquests in their sleep),
In search of game here lively sportsmen meet,
And every bush, and every furrow beat ;
Explore the latent tracts of every field,
Try what the lawns and what the coverts yield.

When the skill'd huntsman, after a survey,
Of each *purlieu*, has singled out his prey ;
Soon as the rustling of the shrubs she hears,
And quick advancing steps, puss pricks her ears.
Hark, hark to Tunewell, bark ! Away she goes,
And makes a scoff of her insulting foes.
When sweet-tongued *Ruler* leads the crying crew,
How fleet and close do all the rest pursue !
Hot-steaming *Driver*, *Silver*, *Darling*, *Tatler*,
Vociferate *Fowler*, *Fav'rite*, *Coral*, *Rattler* ;
Fortune and *Violet*, *Toss-pot*, *Fumy*, *Tipler*,
Careless and *Blossom*, *Merry-lass* and *Fiddler* ;

*Tulip and Wanton, Damsel, Juno, Bowman,
 Cupid and Dido, Tanner, Lady, Rowman ;
 Quick-scented Flora, Comely, Light-foot, Nancy ;
 Phœnix and Seamstress, Ruby, Tulip, Dancy ;
 Whipster and Cloudy ; and, to crown the scene,
 Let us bring Doxy and old Piper in.
 The tawny group is too prolix for rhyme,
 And too encroaching on my reader's time.*

*The frighten'd wand'rer often shifts her rounds,
 To shun the malice of the greedy hounds ;
 Who now in vain their rage and speed renew,
 In vain the distant, doubling hare pursue.
 The magic horn calls in the long-ear'd pack,
 Unrav'ling by degrees her faithless track.
 To fenny marshes then their course they bend,
 And o'er the vast expanse their voice extend,
 When puss the barriers hard behind her spies,
 Couched on the sod, in doubt she closely lies ;
 And as they, tufting, sweep along the field,
 She squatting, lies beneath the fern conceal'd :
 Then straight makes off to some adjacent moss,
 The dogs o'ershoot their game and come t' a loss.
 As they're call'd back, the busy huntsman lights,
 To prick the puss, and put his dogs to rights ;
 First draws his bounds a compass round about,
 Then strictly beats the ground, to tread her out.*

*Forbear, my muse, to tell the sportsman's fears,
 Or what dejection in his looks appears ;
 What great impatience labours in his breast ;
 What peevish doubts his longing heart molest :*

But gently condescend to hide his grief,
And soothe his mind with unforeseen relief.

Now, while the dogs are thus upon the scent,
They all disperse, to try the way she went.
The snarling pack, being *cast* to search about,
Staunch *Rockwood* hunts the ground, and finds her
out.

Some happy eye takes up the distant game,
[Which] loud *holloos* from every voice proclaim.
When thus we have the dear *recovery made*,
In ev'ry face a cheerful air's display'd,
Hoaks, bark to Music—ev'ry vale rebounds,
And *to the finders throw off all the bounds*.
The distant rocks obey the jovial cries,
'Midst thickets, which in gay confusion rise.
The steady dogs are *branching* all round ;
Reverberating hills the shouts rebound.
The valleys speak with voices not their own ;
And echo answers in a fainter tone.
In vain to climb the rugged heights she tries,
In vain to covert from the dogs she flies ;
While in full cry they all increase her dread,
And hard behind the foaming horses tread.
Tracer for scent, and *Spie* renown'd for speed,
Black-foot and *Climb-cliff*, all of *Wiltshire* breed,
With eager haste pursue the tim'rous prey ;
And, sweeping on, or find or make a way :
Until with stiff'ning limbs the fainting hare,
Run fairly down, in death dissolves her fear.
The foremost rider triumphs in the prize,
And strikes with joyful shouts the vaulted skies.

From ev'ry wound springs forth a purple flood,
Spouts in his face, and stains his hands with blood.
Then the tir'd *hunters* all abate their speed ;
And by the *vocal tube* her death's decreed.
The jolly huntsman, loaded with the slain,
Returns in triumph from the echoing plain.

How far superior are the rural sports,
To ease inglorious, or the toil of courts !
From these proceeds an indolence supine,
From those arises all that's masculine.
When verdant glades afford a lively hue,
And the gay lawns are spangled o'er with dew ;
Soon as the glance from mild *Aurora's* eyes,
With crimson smiles adorns the streaky skies :
Fresh, hearty sportsmen, oft surround the wood,
With tuneful horn, with hounds and hunters good ;
Here *storm the thicket* and the craggy rocks,
And soon unkennel here the wily fox.
The prowling cub starts furious from his den,
And scorns the cries of dogs and shouts of men.
The op'ning hounds are fir'd—they snuff and vent,
And trace his footsteps, eager of the scent.
With what prelusive joy they hail the morn,
And with what harmony obey the horn !
Thus rous'd, away the wakeful savage bounds,
Until his ears have lost the wounding sounds.
Exulting then he takes the distant moor,
And in his cunning thinks himself secure.
A froth besmears his grinning chops around,
And, as he runs along, befoams the ground.

Each hungry dog the length'ning chase pursues,
And snuffs the vapour from the tainted dews ;
Till, in united cry, they shoot away,
And in full stretch bear on the bounding prey.
Crowner and Rebel, Kilbuck, Drunkard, Stroler,
Topper and Ringwood, Plowman, Bouncer, Joler ;
Vulcan and Thumper, Snowball, Ranter, Gipsy,
Farmer and Steamer, Trueman, Filter, Topsy ;
Fine-spotted *Dainty, Fill-pot, Jewel, Rover,*
With long-breath'd *Ranger, Dancer, Beauty, Clover,*
And many others (all I cannot name),
Still follow, with unequal pace, the game.
With prick'd up ears, the hunters then renew
Instinctive courage, and the chace pursue.
Their turgid nerves they swell, they snort and blow,
And whitening foam upon the verdure throw.
The woods, the valleys, and the concave sky,
Both earth and air are fill'd with harmony.
When once poor *Reynard* sees himself inclos'd,
By horses, men, and hostile dogs oppos'd ;
When thus he finds his dangers all renew'd,
By all forsaken, and by foes pursu'd,
Strait to the stream (when neither speed nor force,
Nor all his craft avail) he bends his course.
Even there the dogs pursue him through the flood,
And nought will quench their thirst but *Reynard's* blood ;
“ *Who like a felon, conscious of his guilt,*
Is forc'd to bleed, where he much blood hath spilt.”
The deep-tun'd horn his sentence then declares,
And *Reynard* to resist no longer dares.
Indignant, with disdainful grin, he dies,
And malice flashes from his fiery eyes.

It is not necessary for any of my readers to point out to me Mr. Wilkes's faults as a poet—though I wish someone could explain satisfactorily his system of italicising, with which I have not interfered. That *Hounslow Heath* has faults is only too obvious; what takes a little closer scrutiny is to perceive that it also has merits, which I trust my long quotation may have illustrated for my readers. Personally, I feel that this poem should hold a not dishonourable place in the temple of the Muse of Sport.



I now see that there is no escape for me. After *Hounslow Heath* there is nothing for it but that I should say something about William Somerville and *The Chase*—something, but not very much, for, frankly, I find Somerville's verse not immensely interesting. Perhaps that is my fault; but there it is, and, as this is not a history of English poetry, but a concoction to my own taste, I shall please myself about it. Somerville was born in Gloucestershire in 1675, lived the life of a country squire, was apparently a good justice and well liked by his neighbours, married a wife who died childless, published his first book in 1725, and his most famous one, *The Chase*, ten years later in quarto, had money troubles, and died in 1742. Shenstone says in one of his letters: "Our old friend Somerville is dead! I did not imagine I could have

been so sorry as I find myself on this occasion. *Sublatum quærimus?* I can now excuse all his foibles; impute them to age, and to distress of circumstances: the last of these considerations wrings my very soul to think on. For a man of high spirit, conscious of having (at least in one production) generally pleased the world, to be plagued and threatened by wretches that are low in every sense; to be forced to drink himself into pains of the body in order to get rid of the pains of the mind, is a misery which I can well conceive, because I may, without vanity, esteem myself his equal in point of œconomy, and consequently *ought* to have an eye on his misfortunes (as you kindly hinted to me at twelve o'clock at the Feathers): I should retrench. I will, but you shall not see me; I will not let you know that I took your hint in good part. I will do it at solitary times as I may; and yet there will be some difficulty in it; for whatever the *world* might esteem in poor Somerville, I really find, upon critical inquiry, that *I* loved him for nothing so much as his flocci-nauci-nihili-pili-fication of money." This letter, oddly enough, is misdated 1741 in my edition of Shenstone's letters. I find most of Somerville's epistles, tales, songs, and the like, dull and feeble, and often very coarse too. But in *The Chase*, which deals mainly with hare, fox, stag, and otter hunting, and the care of hounds, in *Hobbinol, or the Rural Games*, espe-

cially wrestling and cudgelling for men, and foot-racing for girls, in *Field Sports*, which treats of falconry, and in *The Bowling Green*, there is certainly a quality which makes some of the descriptive passages not altogether negligible. *The Chase* has always been very popular among sporting folk, and it is full of excellent advice on the planning and upkeep of kennels, the breeding of hounds, the treatment and avoidance of rabies, and similar not very poetical themes, which Somerville treated by no means dully. Indeed, the dullest portions of the poems are the would-be poetic apostrophes and excursions. However, I suppose that what a modern reader, who does not happen to be an M.F.H., will value most in *The Chase* are such spirited descriptive passages as that of the stag at bay, or that of the otter-hunt, or this from the account of hare-hunting :

Here on this verdant spot, where Nature kind
 With double blessings crowns the farmer's hopes,
 Where flow'rs autumnal spring, and the rank mead
 Affords the wand'ring hares a rich repast,
 Throw off thy ready pack ! See where they spread,
 And range around, and dash the glitt'ring dew !
 If some stanch hound with his authentic voice
 Avow the recent trail, the jostling tribe
 Attend his call, then with one mutual cry
 The welcome news confirm, and echoing hills
 Repeat the pleasing tale. See how they thread
 The brakes, and up yon furrow drive along !

But quick they back recoil, and wisely check
 Their eager haste ; then o'er the fallow'd ground
 How leisurely they work, and many a pause
 Th' harmonious concert breaks, till more assur'd,
 With joy redoubled the low vallies ring.
 What artful labyrinths perplex their way !
 Ah ! there she lies : how close ! she pants ; she
 doubts

If now she lives : she trembles as she sits,
 With horror seiz'd. The wither'd grass that clings
 Around her head, of the same russet hue,
 Almost deceiv'd my sight, had not her eyes
 With life full-beaming her vain wiles betray'd.
 At distance draw thy pack ; let all be hush'd ;
 No clamour loud, no frantic joy, be heard,
 Lest the wild hound run gadding o'er the plain
 Untractable, nor hear they chiding voice.
 Now gently put her off ; see how direct
 To her known mew she flies ! Here, huntsman, bring
 (But without hurry) all thy jolly hounds,
 And calmly lay them in. How low they stoop,
 And seem to plough the ground ! then all at once
 With greedy nostrils snuff the fuming steam
 That glads their flutt'ring hearts. As winds let loose
 From the dark caverns of the blustering God
 They burst away, and sweep the dewy lawn.
 Hope gives them wings, while she's spurr'd on by fear.
 The welkin rings ; men, dogs, hills, rocks, and woods
 In the full concert join. Now, my brave Youths !
 Stripp'd for the Chase, give all your souls to joy.
 See how their coursers, than the mountain roe
 More fleet, the verdant carpet skim : thick clouds

Snorting they breathe, their shining hoofs scarce
print

The grass unbruised ; with emulation fired
They strain to lead the field, top the barred gate,
O'er the deep ditch exulting bound, and brush
The thorny-twining hedge : the riders bend
O'er their arched necks ; with steady hands, by turns
Indulge their speed, or moderate their rage.
Where are their sorrows, disappointments, wrongs,
Vexations, sickness, cares ? All, all are gone !
And with the panting winds lag far behind.

Huntsman ! her gait observe ; if in wide rings
She wheel her mazy way, in the same round
Persisting still, she'll foil the beaten track ;
But if she fly, and with the favouring wind
Urge her bold course, less intricate thy task ;
Push on thy pack. Like some poor exiled wretch
The frightened Chase leaves her late dear abodes ;
O'er plains remote she stretches far away,
Ah ! never to return ! for greedy Death
Hov'ring exults, secure to seize his prey.

Hark ! from yon covert, where those towering oaks
Above the humble copse aspiring rise,
What glorious triumphs burst in every gale
Upon our ravished ears ! The hunters shout,
The clanging horns swell their sweet-winding notes,
The pack wide opening load the trembling air
With various melody ; from tree to tree
The propagated cry redoubling bounds,

And wingèd Zephyrs waft the floating joy
Thro' all the regions near. Afflictive birch
No more the school-boy dreads ; his prison broke,
Scamp'ring he flies, nor heeds his master's call.
The weary traveller forgets his road,
And climbs th' adjacent hill. The ploughman leaves
Th' unfinish'd furrow ; nor his bleating flocks
Are now the shepherd's joy. Men, boys, and girls
Desert th' unpeopled village, and wild crowds
Spread o'er the plain, by the sweet phrenzy seiz'd.
Look how she pants ! and o'er yon op'ning glade
Slips glancing by ; while at the further end
The puzzling pack unravel wile by wile,
Maze within maze ! the covert's utmost bound
Slily she skirts ; behind them cautious creeps,
And in that very track, so lately stain'd
By all the steaming crowd, seems to pursue
The foe she flies. Let cavillers deny
That brutes have reason ; sure 'tis something more ;
'Tis Heav'n directs, and stratagems inspires
Beyond the short extent of human thought.
But hold—I see her from the covert break ;
Sad on yon little eminence she sits ;
Intent she listens with one ear erect,
Pond'ring, and doubtful what new course to take,
And how to 'scape the fierce blood-thirsty crew
That still urge on, and still in vollies loud
Insult her woes, and mock her sore distress.
As now in louder peals the loaded winds
Bring on the gath'ring storm, her fears prevail.
And o'er the plain and o'er the mountain's ridge
Away she flies ; nor ships with wind and tide

And all their canvas wings, scud half so fast.
 Once more, ye jovial Train ! your courage try,
 And each clean courser's speed. We scour along,
 In pleasing hurry and confusion toss'd,
 Oblivion to be wish'd. The patient pack
 Hang on the scent unweary'd ; up they climb,
 And ardent we pursue : our lab'ring steeds
 We press, we gore, till once the summit gain'd,
 Painfully panting : there we breathe awhile ;
 Then like a foaming torrent, pouring down
 Precipitant, we smoke along the vale.
 Happy the man who with unrivall'd speed
 Can pass his fellows, and with pleasure view
 The struggling pack ! how in the rapid course
 Alternate they preside, and jostling push
 To guide the dubious scent ; how giddy youth
 Oft babbling errs, by wiser age reprov'd :
 How, niggard of his strength, the wise old hound
 Hangs in the rear, till some important point
 Rouse all his diligence, or till the Chase
 Sinking he finds ; then to the head he springs,
 With thirst of glory fir'd, and wins the prize.
 Huntsman ! take heed ; they stop in full career :
 Yon crowding flocks, that at a distance gaze,
 Have haply foil'd the turf. See that old hound,
 How busily he works, but dares not trust
 His doubtful sense ! Draw yet a wider ring.
 Hark ! now again the chorus fills. As bells,
 Sally'd awhile, at once their peal renew,
 And high in air the tuneful thunder rolls.
 See how they toss, with animated rage
 Recov'ring all they lost !—that eager haste

Some doubling wile foreshows. Ah ! yet once more
They're check'd—Hold back with speed—On either
hand

Away they spring ; the rustling stubbles bend
Beneath the driving storm. Now the poor Chase
Begins to flag, to her last shifts reduc'd.
From brake to brake she flies, and visits all
Her well-known haunts, where once she rang'd secure,
With love and plenty bless'd. See ! there she goes ;
She reels along, and by her gait betrays
Her inward weakness. See how black she looks !
The sweat that clogs th' obstructed pores scarce leaves
A languid scent. And now in open view
See, see ! she flies ; each eager hound exerts
His utmost speed, and stretches ev'ry nerve.
How quick she turns, their gaping jaws eludes,
And yet a moment lives, till round enclos'd
By all the greedy pack, with infant screams,
She yields her breath, and there reluctant dies !

This quotation has been a very long one, I fear, but only a long extract could give any idea of Somerville's qualities, for he is not a poet who abounds in beautiful single lines or short passages, though sometimes, in the midst of dull pages, he will catch the reader's wandering imagination with such an isolated felicity as—

Hark ! the loud peal begins, the clam'rous joy,
The gallant chiding, loads the trembling air.

The description of the hunt, which I have just

quoted, is a good passage, but not, I think, a superlatively good one. It is straightforward, vivid, and told in language which, all things considered, is commendably free from the verbal tricks and paraphrases so popular at the time. Yet it certainly has blemishes—it interests one more than it carries one away, and strikes one more as a conglomerated account of many hunts than as a description of a particular day's sport. Moreover, coming down to details, and judging the passage by the exact standard which it challenges, there are one or two faults of fact. It is surely against all observation to assert that the horses' "shining hoofs scarce print the grass unbruised"; let anyone watch a hunt galloping across a meadow! And I feel certain that the lines about the hare's bright eyes betraying his whereabouts is a reminiscence in Somerville's mind, not of hunting the hare with hounds, but of some country walk in which he has seen the hare lying, as he describes, in her form in the grass. This may be called meticulous criticism, but the merits of *The Chase* are of that kind that leads us to consider details carefully. The parts—in this sort of composition—are often a great deal more than the whole. And, anyhow, I don't think Somerville's whole is a very great one. However, before we leave him, let me give quite an agreeable shorter poem of his, the *Address to his Elbow-chair, Newclothed*:

My dear companion, and my faithful friend !
If Orpheus taught the list'ning oaks to bend ;
If stones and rubbish, at Amphion's call,
Danc'd into form, and built the Theban wall,
Why should'st not thou attend my humble lays,
And hear my grateful harp resound thy praise ?

True, thou art spruce and fine, a very beau ;
But what are trappings and external show ?
To real worth alone I make my court ;
Knave are my scorn, and coxcombs are my sport.
Once I beheld thee far less trim and gay,
Ragged, disjointed, and to worms a prey ;
The safe retreat of ev'ry lurking mouse ;
Derided, shunn'd ; the lumber of my house.
Thy robe how chang'd from what it was before !
Thy velvet robe, which pleas'd my sires of yore !
'Tis thus capricious Fortune wheels us round ;
Aloft we mount—then tumble to the ground.
Yet grateful then, my constancy I prov'd ;
I knew thy worth ; my friends in rags I lov'd :
I lov'd thee more ; nor, like a courtier, spurn'd
My benefactor when the tide was turn'd.
With conscious shame, yet frankly, I confess
That in my youthful days—I lov'd thee less.
Where vanity, where pleasure call'd, I stray'd,
And ev'ry wayward appetite obey'd ;
But sage experience taught me how to prize
Myself, and how this world : she bade me rise
To nobler flights, regardless of a race
Of factious emmets ; pointed where to place
My bliss, and lodg'd me in thy soft embrace.

Here on thy yielding down I sit secure,
 And patiently, what Heav'n has sent endure ;
 From all the futile cares of bus'ness free,
 Not fond of life, but yet content to be :
 Here mark the fleeting hours, regret the past,
 And seriously prepare to meet the last.

So safe on shore the pension'd sailor lies,
 And all the malice of the storm defies ;
 With ease of body bless'd, and peace of mind,
 Pities the restless crew he left behind ;
 Whilst in his cell he meditates alone
 On his great voyage to the world unknown.

With these neat and excellent lines—and perhaps they are a little moving, too—let us say good-bye to William Somerville ; for we shall not find many others as good in his works.



Not Somerville, the muse's friend of old,
 Tho' now exalted to yon ambient sky,
 So shun'd a soul distain'd with earth and gold,
 So lov'd the pure, the generous heart, as I.

Thus wrote William Shenstone, the pastoral, elegiac, pseudo-rustical poet, in one of his twenty-six elegies—elegies which are immensely smooth and polished, immensely artificial, and even more immensely tedious. Shenstone is a poet at whom

it is very easy to laugh, for at times he makes pastoral poetry as ludicrous as even it can be :

A tear bedews my Delia's eye,
To think yon playful kid must die ;
From crystal spring, and flowery mead,
Must in his prime of life recede !

Really, one could not have anything worse than that. And most of Shenstone's work—much of which, it is only fair to say, he did not himself consider worthy of publication—strikes one as having a very posed, trimmed, and arranged rusticity. He was a great landscape gardener; his estate of The Leasowes was one of the sights which the refined and cultivated of the seventeen-fifties delighted to visit—and landscape-gardening is just what most of his verse puts us in mind of. And yet Shenstone was the author of some very good poetry indeed ; his Spenserean *The Schoolmistress* is a little masterpiece of quiet humour, which is unfortunately too long for me to quote here. Some of his songs and lighter pieces are very happy, and even in his duller poems we find frequent felicities such as these two stanzas on Thomson's death in autumn :

Tho' Thomson, sweet descriptive bard !
Inspiring Autumn sung ;
Yet how should we the months regard,
That stopp'd his flowing tongue ?

Ah, luckless months, of all the rest,
To whose hard share it fell !
For sure he was the gentlest breast
That ever sung so well.

Shenstone had a large and varied acquaintance, among whom was Bishop Percy; and, though he probably had no direct share in the editing of the *Reliques*, yet he was frequently consulted by Percy during their preparation, and himself was one of the several poets who attempted to write ballads—productions which, though they often achieved a certain charm, yet showed how little the eighteenth century appreciated the real greatness of the traditional ballad. It may be interesting here to give one or two specimens of these pseudo-ballads, and, to begin with, here is Shenstone's *Jemmy Dawson, A Ballad: written about the Time of his Execution, in the Year 1745* :

Come listen to my mournful tale,
Ye tender hearts and lovers dear ;
Nor will you scorn to heave a sigh,
Nor need you blush to shed a tear.

And thou, dear Kitty, peerless maid,
Do thou a pensive ear incline ;
For thou canst weep at every woe ;
And pity every plaint—but mine.

Young Dawson was a gallant boy,
A brighter never trod the plain ;
And well he lov'd one charming maid,
And dearly was he lov'd again.

One tender maid, she lov'd him dear,
Of gentle blood the damsel came ;
And faultless was her beauteous form,
And spotless was her virgin fame.

But curse on party's hateful strife,
That led the favour'd youth astray ;
The day the rebel clans appear'd,
O had he never seen that day !

Their colours, and their sash he wore,
And in the fatal dress was found ;
And now he must that death endure,
Which gives the brave the keenest wound.

How pale was then his true-love's cheek,
When Jemmy's sentence reach'd her ear !
For never yet did Alpine snows
So pale, or yet so chill appear.

With faltering voice, she weeping said,
"O Dawson, monarch of my heart ;
Think not thy death shall end our loves,
For thou and I will never part.

“Yet might sweet mercy find a place,
And bring relief to Jemmy’s woes ;
O George, without a pray’r for thee,
My orisons should never close.

“The gracious prince that gave him life,
Would crown a never-dying flame ;
And every tender babe I bore
Should learn to lisp the giver’s name.

“But tho’ he should be dragg’d in scorn
To yonder ignominious tree ;
He shall not want one constant friend
To share the cruel fates’ decree.”

O then her mourning coach was call’d,
The sledge mov’d slowly on before ;
Tho’ borne in a triumphal car,
She had not lov’d her fav’rite more.

She follow’d him, prepar’d to view,
The terrible behests of law ;
And the last scene of Jemmy’s woes,
With calm and steadfast eye she saw.

Distorted was that blooming face,
What she had fondly lov’d so long ;
And stifled was that tuneful breath,
Which in her praise had sweetly sung :

And sever'd was that beauteous neck,
 Round which her arms had fondly clos'd ;
 And mangled was that beauteous breast,
 On which her lovesick head repos'd :

And ravish'd was that constant heart,
 She did to every heart prefer ;
 For tho' it could its king forget,
 'Twas true and loyal still to her.

Amid those unrelenting flames,
 She bore this constant heart to see ;
 But when 'twas moulder'd into dust,
 "Yet, yet," she cry'd, "I follow thee.

"My death, my death, alone can shew
 The pure, the lasting love I bore ;
 Accept, O heav'n ! of woes like ours,
 And let us, let us weep no more."

The dismal scene was o'er and past,
 The lover's mournful hearse retir'd ;
 The maid drew back her languid head,
 And sighing forth his name, expir'd.

Tho' justice ever must prevail,
 The tear my Kitty sheds, is due ;
 For seldom shall she hear a tale
 So sad, so tender, yet so true.

Another rather more successful imitator of the ballad style was David Mallet (originally Malloch—a change of name which caused the poet to be included in Dr. Johnson's *Dictionary* under the word *Alias*), a rather shady Scotch scribbler, who, in the twenties of the century, wrote *William and Margaret*, which has perhaps caught a more genuine tone from the fragment of a real ballad which Mallet incorporated in it. It is, I hope, pertinent to insert *William and Margaret* here, in comparison with Shenstone's effort in the same kind :

'Twas at the silent solemn hour
 When night and morning meet,
 In glided Marg'ret's grimly ghost,
 And stood at William's feet.

Her face was like an April morn
 Clad in a wintry cloud,
 And clay-cold was her lily hand
 That held her sable shroud.

So shall the fairest face appear
 When youth and years are flown ;
 Such is the robe that kings must wear
 When Death has reft their crown.

Her bloom was like the springing flow'r
 That sips the silver dew ;
 The rose was budded in her cheek,
 Just op'ning to the view.

But Love had, like the canker-worm,
Consum'd her early prime :
The rose grew pale, and left her cheek ;
She dy'd before her time.

“Awake,” she cry'd, “thy true love calls,
Come from her midnight grave ;
Now let thy pity hear the maid
Thy love refus'd to save.

“This is the dumb and dreary hour
When injur'd ghosts complain,
When yawning graves give up their dead
To haunt the faithless swain.

“Bethink thee, William ! of thy fault,
Thy pledge and broken oath,
And give me back my maiden vow,
And give me back my troth.

“Why did you promise love to me,
And not that promise keep ?
Why did you swear my eyes were bright,
Yet leave those eyes to weep ?

“How could you say my face was fair,
And yet that face forsake ?
How could you win my virgin heart,
And leave that heart to break ?

“ Why did you say my lip was sweet,
And made the scarlet pale ?
And why did I, young witless maid !
Believe the flatt’ring tale ?

“ That face, alas ! no more is fair,
Those lips no longer red :
Dark are my eyes, now clos’d in death,
And ev’ry charm is fled.

“ The hungry worm my sister is ;
This winding sheet I wear ;
And cold and weary lasts our night,
Till that last morn appear.

“ But hark ! the cock has warn’d me hence ;
A long and late adieu !
Come see, false Man ! how low she lies
Who dy’d for love of you.”

The lark sung loud, the morning smil’d
With beams of rosy red ;
Pale William quak’d in ev’ry limb,
And raving left his bed.

He hy’d him to the fatal place
Where Marg’ret’s body lay,
And stretch’d him on the green-grass turf
That wrapp’d her breathless clay.

And thrice he call'd on Marg'ret's name,
 And thrice he wept full sore,
 Then laid his cheek to her cold grave,
 And word spoke never more !

Evidently that is the work of a man who had some partial appreciation of balladry, but was unable to analyse that appreciation, or to reproduce more than a faint ghost of the reality of such a ballad as was obviously his inspiration. And even this faint ghost had faded from a much later ballad of Mallet's, *Edwin and Emma*, which I take from his octavo *Poems on Several Occasions*, of 1762—the second book of that title which he issued.

Far in the windings of a vale,
 Fast by a sheltering wood,
 The safe retreat of health and peace,
 An humble cottage stood.

There beauteous Emma flourish'd fair,
 Beneath a mother's eye ;
 Whose only wish on earth was now
 To see her blest, and die.

The softest blush that Nature spreads
 Gave color to her cheek :
 Such orient color smiles thro' heaven,
 When vernal mornings break.

Nor let the pride of great ones scorn
This charmer of the plains :
That sun, who bids *their* diamond blaze,
To paint *our* lilly deigns.

Long had she fill'd each youth with love,
Each maiden with despair ;
And tho' by all a wonder own'd,
Yet knew not she was fair.

Till Edwin came, the pride of swains,
A soul devoid of art ;
And from whose eyes, serenely mild,
Shone forth the feeling heart.

A mutual flame was quickly caught :
Was quickly too reveal'd :
For neither bosom lodg'd a wish,
That virtue keeps conceal'd.

What happy hours of home-felt bliss
Did love on both bestow !
But bliss too mighty long to last,
Where fortune proves a foe.

His Sister, who, like Envy form'd,
Like *her* in mischief joy'd,
To work them harm, with wicked skill,
Each darker art employ'd.

The Father too, a sordid man,
 Who love nor pity knew,
 Was all-unfeeling as the clod,
 From whence his riches grew.

Long had he seen their secret flame,
 And seen it long unmov'd :
 Then with a father's frown at last
 Had sternly disapprov'd.

In Edwin's gentle heart, a war
 Of differing passions strove :
 His heart, that durst not disobey,
 Yet could not cease to love.

Deny'd her sight, he oft behind
 The spreading hawthorn crept,
 To snatch a glance, to mark the spot
 Where Emma walk'd and wept.

Oft too on Stanemore's wintry waste,
 Beneath the moonlight-shade,
 In sighs to pour his soften'd soul,
 The midnight-mourner stray'd.

His cheek, where health with beauty glow'd,
 A deadly pale o'ercast :
 So fades the fresh rose in its prime,
 Before the northern blast.

The parents now, with late remorse,
Hung o'er his dying bed ;
And weary'd heaven with fruitless vows,
And fruitless sorrow shed.

" 'Tis past ! " he cry'd, " but if your souls
Sweet mercy yet can move,
Let these dim eyes once more behold,
What they must ever love ! "

She came ; his cold hand softly touch'd,
And bath'd with many a tear :
Fast-falling o'er the primrose pale,
So morning dews appear.

But oh ! his sister's jealous care,
A cruel sister she !
Forbade what Emma came to say :
" My Edwin, live for me."

Now homeward as she hopeless wept
The Church-yard path along,
The blast blew cold, the dark owl scream'd
Her lover's funeral song.

Amid the falling gloom of night,
Her startling fancy found
In every bush his hovering shade,
His groan in every sound.

Alone, appall'd, thus had she pass'd
 The visionary vale—
 When lo ! the death-bell smote her ear,
 Sad-sounding in the gale !

Just then she reach'd, with trembling step,
 Her aged mother's door—
 " He's gone ! " she cry'd, " and I shall see
 That angel-face no more !

" I feel, I feel this breaking heart
 Beat high against my side——"
 From her white arm down sunk her head ;
 She shivering, sigh'd, and died.

One must have a very tender spot indeed in one's heart if one is going to say much in defence of *Edwin and Emma*, which is feeble stuff, I am very much afraid ; yet the line between failure and success is very faint in this kind, as can easily be seen by looking at some of its best and most popular examples, such as Goldsmith's *Edwin and Angelina* in *The Vicar of Wakefield*, or Percy's *The Hermit of Warkworth*. And these eighteenth-century tearful, domesticated ballads had a tradition and manner of their own—not a great one, certainly, but one not altogether without charm or without historical importance, though it was based, as I said before, on a misunderstanding,

or perhaps on an only partial understanding, of the real folk-ballad.

But let me return to Shenstone; not to his elegies *à la* James Hammond (that very minor poetaster who exercised an influence on many real poets and even on so great a man as Gray), not to his moral pieces (among which, oddly enough, was placed the delightful *Schoolmistress*, which I refuse to select from, and cannot print in its entirety), but to his songs and lighter pieces. Some of the songs—there are eighteen of them—are really excellent in his own artificial manner, and as Shenstone, for all he was in his day a loadstone which attracted the admiration of many very pretty poets—Cunningham, Jago, and his cobbler-neighbour James Woodhouse, among others—is not to-day very widely read, I take this opportunity of quoting three of them, in the hope that some of my readers may be tempted to make further acquaintance with Shenstone on their own account.

SONG II

The Landskip

How pleas'd within my native bowers
 Erewhile I pass'd the day !
 Was ever scene so deck'd with flowers ?
 Were ever flowers so gay ?

How sweetly smil'd the hill, the vale,
 And all the landskip round !
 The river gliding down the dale !
 The hill with beeches crown'd !

But now, when urg'd by tender woes
 I speed to meet my dear,
 That hill and stream my zeal oppose,
 And check my fond career.

No more, since Daphne was my theme,
 Their wonted charms I see :
 The verdant hill, and silver stream,
 Divide my love and me.

SONG XI

Written in 1744

Perhaps it is not love, said I,
 That melts my soul when Flavia's nigh ;
 Where wit and sense like her's agree,
 One may be pleas'd, and yet be free.

The beauties of her polish'd mind,
 It needs no lover's eye to find ;
 The hermit freezing in his cell,
 Might wish the gentle Flavia well.

It is not love—averse to bear
 The servile chains that lovers wear ;
 Let, let me all my fears remove,
 My doubts dispel—it is not love.

Oh ! when did wit so brightly shine
 In any form less fair than thine ?
 It is—it is love's subtle fire,
 And under friendship lurks desire.

SONG XVII

Written in a Collection of Bacchanalian Songs

Adieu, ye jovial youths, who join
 To plunge old Care in floods of wine ;
 And, as your dazzled eye-balls roll,
 Discern him struggling in the bowl.

Nor yet is hope so wholly flown,
 Nor yet is thought so tedious grown,
 But limpid stream and shady tree
 Retain, as yet, some sweets for me.

And see, thro' yonder silent grove,
 See yonder does my Daphne rove :
 With pride her footsteps I pursue,
 And bid your frantic joys adieu.

The sole confusion I admire,
 Is that my Daphne's eyes inspire :
 I scorn the madness you approve,
 And value reason next to love.

Horace Walpole said that Shenstone "was labouring all his life to write a perfect song, and, in my opinion at least, never once succeeded." I hope that not many of my readers will agree

with him, for it seems to me that, though one may conceivably not care for the kind of song Shenstone wrote, it is impossible to say that he never produced anything perfect in that kind. And, personally, I find that kind a very pleasant one, when I am in the right mood for it. Of light, humorous verse Shenstone also produced one or two very happy examples, though he also wrote some things of this sort which are, for so cultivated a poet, oddly coarse and unpleasant, and were, even in his own day, considered so. Dr. Johnson remarked, *à propos* of these *Levities*, "that his humour is sometimes gross and seldom sprightly"—not, I think, altogether a fair comment, for some of these *Levities* are done just to a turn, as such things should be, somewhat in the manner of Prior. Take, for example, this agreeable little jest.

THE EXTENT OF COOKERY

Aliusque et idem

When Tom to Cambridge first was sent,
A plain brown bob he wore ;
Read much, and look'd as tho' he meant
To be a fop no more.

See him to Lincoln's-Inn repair,
His resolution flag ;
He cherishes a length of hair,
And tucks it in a bag.

Nor Coke nor Salkeld he regards,
 But gets into the House,
 And soon a judge's rank rewards
 His pliant votes and bows.

Adieu, ye bobs ! Ye bags, give place !
 Full-bottoms come instead !
 Good L—d ! to see the various ways
 Of dressing a calve's-head !

The Progress of Advice and the lines beginning
 " From Lincoln to London rode forth our young
 squire " are also good, but Shenstone's master-
 piece in this sort is the lines *Written at an Inn at
 Henley*, which almost soar into the higher and
 very thinly populated realms of comic poetry :

To thee, fair freedom ! I retire
 From flattery, cards, and dice, and din ;
 Nor art thou found in mansions higher
 Than the low cott, or humble inn.

'Tis here with boundless pow'r I reign ;
 And ev'ry health which I begin,
 Converts dull port to bright Champagne ;
 Such freedom crowns it, at an inn.

I fly from pomp, I fly from plate !
 I fly from falsehood's specious grin !
 Freedom I love, and form I hate,
 And chuse my lodgings at an inn.

Here, waiter ! take my sordid ore,
 Which lacqueys else might hope to win ;
 It buys, what courts have not in store ;
 It buys me freedom, at an inn.

Whoe'er has travell'd life's dull round,
 Where'er his stages may have been,
 May sigh to think he still has found
 The warmest welcome at an inn.

Shenstone died, unmarried, on the 11th of February, 1763, aged forty-nine. In 1764 Dodsley issued his works—verse and prose—in two well-produced octavo volumes, to which a third, of letters, was added in 1769. It is in this edition that it is most agreeable to read the poet of *The Leasowes* ; and luckily it may be picked up for a very few shillings in almost any bookshop.



I now hear Shenstone's friend and correspondent from school days onward, the Reverend Richard Jago, knocking, with an authority that may not be disregarded, upon my study door. Yet if he thinks that I am going to copy out here his long topographical poem of *Edgehill*, which he published in quarto in 1767, he is much mistaken. Of this country clergyman's muse I will limit myself to two examples, the short and charming song of *Absence*, and the elegy of *The Blackbirds*,

which is highly entertaining, both intentionally and, I suspect, also unintentionally.

ABSENCE

With leaden foot Time creeps along
While Delia is away,
With her, nor plaintive was the song,
Nor tedious was the day.

Ah ! envious pow'r ! reverse thy doom,
Now double thy career,
Strain ev'ry nerve, stretch ev'ry plume,
And rest them when she's here.

THE BLACKBIRDS

An Elegy

The Sun had chas'd the mountain-snow,
His beams had pierc'd the stubborn soil,
The melting streams began to flow,
And plowmen urg'd their annual toil.

'Twas then, amidst the vocal throng,
Whom Nature wak'd to mirth, and love,
A Blackbird rais'd his am'rous song,
And thus it echo'd thro' the grove.

"O fairest of the feather'd train !
For whom I sing, for whom I burn,
Attend with pity to my strain,
And grant my love a kind return.

“ For see, the wintry storms are flown,
And zephyrs gently fan the air ;
Let us the genial influence own,
Let us the vernal pastime share.

“ The Raven plumes his jetty wing,
To please his croaking paramour,
The Larks responsive carols sing,
And tell their passion as they soar :

“ But does the Raven’s sable wing
Excel the glossy jet of mine ?
Or can the Lark more sweetly sing,
Than we, who strength with softness join ?

“ O let me then thy steps attend !
I’ll point new treasures to thy sight :
Whether the grove thy wish befriend,
Or hedge-rows green, or meadows bright.

“ I’ll guide thee to the clearest rill,
Where streams among the pebbles stray ;
There will we sip, and sip our fill,
Or on the flow’ry margin play.

“ I’ll lead thee to the thickest brake,
Impervious to the school-boy’s eye ;
For thee the plaister’d nest I’ll make,
And to thy downy bosom fly.

“When, prompted by a mother’s care,
 Thy warmth shall form th’ imprison’d young,
 The pleasing task I’ll gladly share,
 Or cheer thy labours with a song.

“To bring thee food I’ll range the fields,
 And cull the best of ev’ry kind,
 Whatever Nature’s bounty yields,
 And love’s assiduous care can find.

“And when my lovely mate would stray,
 To taste the summer sweets at large,
 I’ll wait at home the live-long day,
 And fondly tend our little charge.

“Then prove with me the sweets of love,
 With me divide the cares of life,
 No bush shall boast in all the grove,
 A mate so fond, so blest a wife.”

He ceas’d his song—the plummy dame
 Heard with delight the love-sick strain,
 Nor long conceal’d a mutual flame,
 Nor long repress’d his am’rous pain.

He led her to the nuptial bow’r,
 And perch’d with triumph by her side ;
 What gilded roof cou’d boast that hour
 A fonder mate, or happier bride ?

Next morn he wak'd her with a song,
 "Behold," he said, "the new-born day,
 The Lark his mattin-peal has rung,
 Arise, my love, and come away."

Together thro' the fields they stray'd,
 And to the murm'ring riv'let's side,
 Renew'd their vows, and hopp'd, and play'd
 With artless joy, and decent pride.

When O! with grief my Muse relates
 What dire misfortune clos'd the tale,
 Sent by an order from the Fates,
 A Gunner met them in the vale.

Alarm'd the lover cried, "My dear,
 Haste, haste away, from danger fly;
 Here, Gunner, point thy thunder here,
 O spare my love, and let me die."

At him the Gunner took his aim,
 Too sure the volley'd thunder flew!
 O had he chose some other game,
 Or shot—as he was wont to do!

Divided Pair! forgive the wrong,
 While I with tears your fate rehearse,
 I'll join the Widow's plaintive song,
 And save the Lover in my verse.

Both these poems are to be found in the octavo edition of *Poems, Moral and Descriptive, by the late Richard Jago, A.M.*, 1784. Jago had prepared these poems for the Press before his death in 1781. *The Blackbirds* was immensely admired in its day, and was at one time erroneously attributed in print to Gilbert West, though the error was later put right. A more amusing, though less honest, mis-attribution of its authorship is recorded in the account of the life and writings of Jago, prefixed to his *Poems*. "As for the Elegy on the *Blackbirds*, we need no other proof of its merit than the violent inclination which some persons have discovered, unjustly to appropriate to themselves the credit of that performance. When it first appeared, with Jago's name to it, in Dodsley's *Miscellanies*, a manager of the Bath Theatre, with unparalleled effrontery, boasted in the circle of his acquaintance that *he* was the author of it; and that Jago was a fictitious name which he had adopted, from the celebrated tragedy of *Othello*." Our poet attempted other similar elegies on *The Goldfinches* and *The Swallows*, and in the former are lines which carry his style to unimaginable flights of absurdity:

'Twas gentle Spring, when all the plummy race,
By Nature taught, in nuptial leagues combine.

When a man will write that he will write anything,

and it is time for the reader to turn to some other poet for instruction and amusement.



For a short space, therefore, let us dip into the works of another country clergyman, Francis Fawkes, who had a great reputation in his day both as an original poet and as a translator of Greek lyrics and epigrams. One song of his, *The Brown Jug*, had an enormous success in its day, and Fawkes certainly had a considerable gift for robust, rather rough, comic verse. His octavo *Original Poems and Translations* appeared in 1761 with a list of subscribers of whom any man might be proud, for among them were Johnson, Goldsmith, Sterne, Richardson, Garrick, Dodsley, Hogarth, Young, Shenstone, Quin, Smollett, Wharton, Whitehead (the poet-laureate), and many other well-known men and women. A large section of the book was given to translations from Menander, some of which were neatly done. Such a one is this :

SORROW FAMILIAR TO ALL MEN

Sure sorrows are to human-kind ally'd :
 They reign where Fortune pours her golden tide
 Besiege the son of glory's splendid door,
 Grow gray and old together with the poor.

And such, too, are these :

BANISH CARE

Whate'er offends thee, care, or grief, or strife,
Drive far away beyond the verge of life ;
For here, alas, we little time possess,
And every sorrow makes that little less.

THE MAN OF REASON

In human nature nothing can excel
The man that regulates and reasons well ;
To show good sense and order in a thing,
Denotes the chief, the counsellor, the king :
These noble virtues nothing can exceed,
The man of reason is a man indeed.

MAN BLIND TO FUTURE EVENTS

Say not, O man ! for it becomes thee not,
" This evil shall not happen to my lot."

The last seems to me particularly happy in its blend of depth of feeling and economy of expression. Another favourite exercise of Fawkes's seems to have been the translation into English of the Latin verses of Christopher Smart, Vincent Bourne, and others. From Bourne—whose *Poematia* one still finds commonly in bookshops, and who was the most popular Latin poet of the eighteenth century—Fawkes made one or two very humorous sheets of verse, including *The Stage Coach*, which I imagine that Hogarth, at any rate, among the subscribers to the book, enjoyed :

To pay my duty to sweet Mrs. Page,
 A place was taken in the Stamford stage.
 Our coachman Dick, the shades of night to shun,
 Had yok'd his horses long before the sun :
 Disturb'd I start ; and drowsy all the while,
 Rise to be jolted many a weary mile ;
 On both sides squeez'd, how highly was I bless'd !
 Between two plump old women to be press'd !
 A corporal fierce, a nurse and child that cried,
 And a fat landlord fill'd the other side.
 Scarce dawns the morning, ere the cumbrous load
 Rolls roughly-rumbling o'er the rugged road.
 One old wife coughs, and wheezes in my ears,
 Loud scolds the other, and the corporal swears ;
 Sour, unconcocted breath escapes my host,
 The squawling child returns his milk and toast :
 Ye Gods ! if such the pleasures of the stage,
 I chuse to walk and visit Mrs. Page.

I had an idea in my mind of printing against this Vincent Bourne's original, but, on looking at it, I suspect—though I am no judge of these things—that Fawkes has very much improved on his model, and has made this picture more particular, more vivid, and lighter in touch. In any case, Bourne's Latin verses do not strike me as particularly amusing in this instance, so we will let Fawkes's version stand by itself, and also stand as a solitary example of his powers of country humour, of which, if you care to look up his book, you will find other good examples in *An Elegy on*

the Death of Dobbin, the Butterwoman's Horse, in An Epithalamium on the Marriage of a Cobbler and a Chimney-Sweeper, and in The Smoking Doctor's Soliloquy over his Pipe. Yet it would be a gross piece of injustice to our reverend poet to hurry on too quickly, without allowing him, that is, a few moments wherein to regale us with his most famous production :

THE BROWN JUG

A Song

(Imitated from the Latin of Hieronymus Amaltheus)

Dear Tom, this brown jug that now foams with mild ale,
 (In which I will drink to sweet Nan of the Vale)
 Was once Toby Fillpott, a thirsty old soul
 As e'er drank a bottle, or fathom'd a bowl ;
 In boosing about 'twas his praise to excell,
 And among jolly toppers he bore off the bell.

It chanc'd as in dog-days he sat at his ease
 In his flow'r-woven arbour as gay as you please,
 With a friend and a pipe puffing sorrows away,
 And with honest old stingo was soaking his clay,
 His breath-doors of life on a sudden were shut,
 And he died full as big as a Dorchester butt.

His body, when long in the ground it had lain,
 And time into clay had resolv'd it again,
 A potter found out in its covert so snug
 And with part of fat Toby he form'd this brown jug,
 Now sacred to friendship, and mirth, and mild ale,
 So here's to my lovely sweet Nan of the Vale.

This excellent song has everywhere had a great success, and has been quoted in many places—amongst others in the House of Commons by Canning in a speech on Catholic Emancipation. One never quite knows what poetical oddities (I don't refer to members, but to quotations) are going to find their way into Parliament next—even *Drunken Barnaby* has been there in his time, with his—

In my progress travelling Northward,
Taking my farewell o' th' Southward,
To Banbery came I, O prophane one !
Where I saw a Puritane-one
Hanging of his cat on Monday,
For killing of a mouse on Sunday.

Or, in not very classical Latin :

In progressu Boreali,
Ut processi ab Australi,
Veni Banbery, O prophanum !
Ubi vidi Puritanum,
Felem facientem furem,
Quia Sabbatho stravit murem.

Though, perhaps, the really odd thing is that Brathwaite's famous bilingual poem has only been quoted on one solitary occasion (as far as I know, —but then I am no Hansard) in the Mother of Parliaments.



George Lyttelton, first Baron Lyttelton, was another friend of Shenstone's, and his rival in poetry and landscape gardening, which latter pursuit he followed at Hagley in Worcestershire, an estate which lay not far distant from The Leasowes. He was also a friend of a much greater poet, Alexander Pope, and the only one of his earlier poems which can now be read with much pleasure, *The Advice to a Lady*, written in 1733, is definitely an attempt to write in Pope's style. The poem is not very remarkable, but it is full of sound sense, in a "Be good, fair maid, and let who will be clever" manner, and some of its couplets run trippingly enough :

Be still superior to your sex's arts,
Nor think dishonesty a proof of parts :
For you the plainest is the wisest rule,
" A cunning woman is a knavish fool."

Seek to be good, but aim not to be great,
A woman's noblest station is retreat.

The model is obvious, but Lyttelton did his model no dishonour. Among other friends of his were Thomson (for an edition of whose works he was responsible), Fielding (who dedicated *Tom Jones* to him), and, to come to the lesser lights, Hammond, Edward Moore (who wrote *Fables for the Female Sex*), and Glover. In his day he was most admired for his *Monody* on the death of his first wife, Lucy,

who died in 1747, after five years of very happy married life. Of the *Monody* it was said that it "will be read while conjugal affection and a taste for poetry exist in this country," but, though these two things are now, I believe and trust, in a flourishing condition among us, the poem does not to-day find many readers, I fear. It is, however, a considerable performance written with real feeling, and occasionally finding within its grasp that simplicity of diction in which deep feeling is most happily expressed.

In vain I look around
 O'er all the well-known ground
 My Lucy's wonted footsteps to descry,
 Where oft we us'd to walk,
 Where oft in tender talk
 We saw the summer sun go down the sky.

We were the happiest pair of human kind.
 The rolling year its varying course perform'd,
 And back return'd again,
 Another and another smiling came,
 And saw our happiness unchang'd remain :
 Still in her golden chain
 Harmonious concord did our wishes bind,
 Our studies, pleasures, taste, the same.
 O fatal stroke !
 That all this pleasing fabric Love had rais'd
 Of rare felicity,
 On which e'en wanton vice with envy gaz'd,

And ev'ry scheme of bliss our hearts had form'd
 With soothing hope for many a future day,
 In one sad moment broke !

Such lines have a genuine note of grief in them, which sounds all the more distinctly to us as coming from the work of one who was clearly not a professional poet. He was, in fact, an honourable gentleman and statesman of literary tastes, who devoted some of his leisure to the writing of verse, and had at his command, when the great emotional crisis of his life came, an instrument of which he was only partially the master. But with this instrument he managed to express to us something of his loss, and to draw for us a picture of his lady as a very modest, retiring, cultivated, and loveable woman. Yet the poem is not a perfect one ; it has passages which to-day sound artificial, and it would certainly be better were it rather shorter.



Lyttelton's collected poems make but a tiny volume, but there are in it, besides the pieces to which I have already referred, one or two charming trifles. The most important of these (can a trifle be important ?) is the song with the refrain " Tell me, my heart, if this be love ? " which is so well known, and is quoted, even to-day, in so many anthologies, that I shall not print it in this book. As good, nay, better, I think, is another song :

The heavy hours are almost past
 That part my love and me ;
 My longing eyes may hope at last
 Their only wish to see.

But how, my Delia ! will you meet
 The man you've lost so long ?
 Will love in all your pulses beat,
 And tremble on your tongue ?

Will you in ev'ry look declare
 Your heart is still the same,
 And heal each idly anxious care
 Our fears in absence frame ?

Thus, Delia ! thus I paint the scene
 When shortly we shall meet,
 And try what yet remains between
 Of loit'ring time to cheat.

But if the dream that soothes my mind
 Shall false and groundless prove,
 If I am doom'd at length to find
 You have forgot to love ;

All I of Venus ask is this,
 No more to let us join,
 But grant me here the flatt'ring bliss
 To die and think you mine.

These lines seem to me to be very neat and
 pleasing, and to have caught, with a difference,

the sweet cadence of Sedley and Rochester at their best. There is merit, too, in this other song of Lyttelton's :

Say, Myra ! why is gentle love
A stranger to that mind
Which pity and esteem can move,
Which can be just and kind ?

Is it because you fear to share
The ills that love molest,
The jealous doubt, the tender care,
That rack the am'rous breast ?

Alas ! by some degree of woe
We ev'ry bliss must gain :
The heart can ne'er a transport know
That never feels a pain.

In these two songs, I repeat, Lyttelton seems to me to come nearer than any other poet of his time to the Restoration lyric. He has to a nicety the trick of opening with a phrase that catches the ear and lingers in it, and of working through an agreeably or wittily reasoned middle to an end, which also haunts the ear. He leaves us thus, as do so many of the Restoration singers, with the recollection of two phrases that haunt us, and are logically and ingeniously linked up, the one to the other.



When, some years since, I began to collect the minor poets of the eighteenth century—or chiefly those of that century—one of the first books I picked up was the *Poems on Several Occasions*, 8vo, 1757, of Samuel Boyce. I paid sixpence for this volume, but, owing to the rise in the value of books, doubtless it is now worth at least a shilling. Practically nothing is known of Boyce, I think. He was an engraver by profession, wrote an unacted dramatic pastoral *The Rover, or Happiness at Last*, which was published in quarto in 1752, held a place in the South Sea House, was the author of a good many songs for the stage, and died in 1775. I fancy he may have been a relative of William Boyce, the musician, who is in the list of subscribers to his *Poems*, a list which contains many not undistinguished names, among them Dr. Armstrong, Colley and Theophilus Cibber, Defesch the composer, Derrick the poet, David Garrick, Grignion the engraver, Hayman the painter, William Jackson of Exeter the composer, Joshua Reynolds, Smollett, Christopher Smart, and Mrs. Margaret Woffington. The frontispiece to the book is engraved by the author after a drawing by S. Wale, and it represents *Fortune obstructing the Genius of Poetry in its Ascent to the Temples of Learning and Fame*. Boyce has a distinct talent for the pastoral song, a kind in which he produced one or two very creditable exercises, and he had a musical ear which made his

best verses ring with a pleasant if rather tinkling note. Many of them were set to music and turn up in various collections of songs. At heroic couplets he is not much of a hand, but sometimes he turns a neat enough epigram in a more flippant metre :

Quoth his heir, to Sir John,
 " I'd to travel begone,
 Like others, the world for to see."
 Quoth Sir John, to his heir,
 " Prithee, novice, forbear,
 For I'd not have the world to see thee."

In another similar trifle he perpetrates a pun in which Tom Hood might have taken some pleasure :

Poor Jasper with fits, from his cradle was vex'd,
 And Kate, whom he lov'd, this disorder perplex'd ;
 In wedlock they happen'd each other to catch ;
 And who can deny, but that 'twas a fit match ?

Yet I suppose such things are poor support upon which to rely for a poet's immortality. Luckily Boyce's pastoral songs give him a much better chance of a tiny place in the hearts of those who love poetry, for in his songs he shows a real gaiety and a felicitous lilt, for which he deserves some little remembrance. There are in his book some half-dozen pieces of this sort, the best of which,

I think, are the two following. Each of them was headed by Boyce merely *Song*. I take it upon myself to name them, respectively, after each pastoral "fair" celebrated in their lines.

DAPHNE

Young Daphne was the prettiest maid
 The eyes of love could see ;
 And but one fault the charmer had :
 'Twas cruelty to me.
 No swain that e'er the nymph ador'd,
 Was fonder, or was younger ;
 Yet when her pity I implor'd,
 'Twas " Stay a little longer."

It chanc'd I met the blooming fair,
 One May-morn in the grove ;
 When Cupid whisper'd in my ear,
 " Now, now's the time for love."
 I clasp'd the maid, it wak'd her pride,
 " What, did I mean to wrong her ? "
 " Not so, my gentle dear ! " I cry'd,
 " But love will stay no longer."

Then, kneeling at her feet, I swore,
 How much I lov'd, how well ;
 And that my heart, which beat for her,
 With her should ever dwell.
 Consent stood speaking in the eye
 Of all my care's prolonger ;
 Yet soft she utter'd, with a sigh,
 " Oh, stay a little longer."

The conflict in her soul I saw,
 'Twixt virtue and desire ;
" Oh, come," I cry'd, " let Hymen's law
 Give sanction to love's fire."
Ye lovers, guess how great my joys ;
 Could rapture well prove stronger !
When Virtue spoke, in Daphne's voice,
 " You now shall stay no longer."

SALLY

No nymph that trips the verdant plains,
 With Sally can compare ;
She wins the hearts of all the swains,
 And rivals all the fair.
The beams of Sol delight and chear,
 While summer seasons roll ;
But Sally's smiles can all the year
 Give summer to the soul.

When from the east the morning ray
 Illumes the world below,
Her presence bids the God of day
 With emulation glow :
Fresh beauties deck the painted ground ;
 Birds sweeter notes prepare ;
The playful lambkins skip around,
 And hail the sister fair.

The lark but strains his liquid throat,
 To bid the maid rejoice ;
And mimics, while he swells the note,
 The sweetness of her voice :

The fanning zephyrs round her play,
 While Flora sheds perfume ;
 And ev'ry flow'ret seems to say,
 " I but for Sally bloom."

The am'rous youths her charms proclaim ;
 From morn to eve their tale ;
 Her beauty and unspotted fame,
 Make vocal ev'ry vale.
 The stream, meand'ring through the mead,
 Her echo'd name conveys ;
 And ev'ry voice, and ev'ry reed,
 Is tun'd to Sally's praise.

No more shall blithesome lass and swain,
 To mirthful wake resort ;
 Nor ev'ry May-morn on the plain
 Advance in rural sport :
 No more shall gush the gurgling rill,
 Nor music wake the grove ;
 Nor flocks look snow-like on the hill,
 When I forget to love.

Lives there a man with soul so dead that he cannot find it in him to enjoy such smooth and accomplished and charming song-writing as Boyce's ? It is true, of course, that most of the ingredients are old—the swain, the blooming fair, the reed, the mead, and the vocal vale ; yet how well are they sung ! The mere copying of them upon paper causes me to do what I had not intended

to give one more short specimen of Boyce's very genuine gift as a song-writer. It is a rewriting of the old theme, which Cowley treated in—

Margarita first possest,
If I remember well, my breast,

and Rochester, oh, so wonderfully, in—

All my past life is mine no more.

Boyce certainly could do it no better, not so well even, yet he did it well enough in his little poem of

THE CONFESSION

Oh, Sephalissa ! dearest maid !
So blooming, kind, and free,
The goddess of Cythera's shade
Is not so fair as thee !

Thy image always fills my mind ;
The theme of ev'ry song :
I'm fix'd to thee alone, I find,
But ask not for how long.

The fair in gen'ral I've admir'd ;
Have oft been false and true ;
And when the last my fancy tir'd,
It wander'd round to you.

Then while I can I'll be sincere,
As turtles to their mates :
This moment's yours and mine, my dear !
The next, you know, is fate's.

Cowley made a glorious joke of the theme, and Rochester a lyric that moves the heart almost to tears. In Boyce's hands it becomes a very pretty, neat little toy. There is room in the world for all three.

● ● ●

To quote, as I am now about to do, the *Song to Winifreda*, is perhaps not quite playing fair, for I do not possess a copy of it, save in Professor Arber's *The Pope Anthology*. I first met the poem, however, in Anderson's edition of the British poets at the National Liberal Club—surely a sufficiently prosaic spot wherein to light upon a beautiful lyric. The song is there printed in the works of John Gilbert Cooper (1723–69), who did not, however, write it, but merely wrote what he alleged to be an imitation of it; and he printed it in his *Letters on Taste* of 1754. According to Professor Arber it was first published by D. Lewis, in the *Miscellaneous Poems*, which he edited in 1726. I suppose the identity of the author will now never be discovered, though one might hazard a guess that David Lewis wrote it himself.

SONG TO WINIFREDA

Away, let nought to Love displeasing,
My Winifreda, move thy fear;
Let nought delay the heavenly blessing,
No squeamish pride, nor gloomy care.

What though no grants of royal donors
With pompous titles grace our blood ?
We'll shine in more substantial honours,
And, to be noble, we'll be good.

What though from Fortune's lavish bounty
No mighty treasures we possess ?
We'll find within our pittance plenty,
And be content without excess.

Still shall each kind returning season
Sufficient for our wishes give ;
For we will live a life of reason,
And that's the only life to live.

Our name, while virtue thus we tender,
Shall sweetly sound where'er 'tis spoke ;
And all the great ones much shall wonder,
How they admire such little folk.

Through youth and age, in love excelling,
We'll hand in hand together tread ;
Sweet smiling Peace shall crown our dwelling,
And babes, sweet smiling babes, our bed.

How should I love the pretty creatures,
Whilst round my knees they fondly clung ;
To see them look their mother's features,
To hear them lisp their mother's tongue.

And when with envy Time, transported,
 Shall think to rob us of our joys,
 You'll in your girls again be courted,
 And I go wooing in my boys.

I have printed the text as it is in Anderson, Arber's text (which is, I presume, Lewis's) varies considerably in detail, and any reader of this book, who is sufficiently interested in this touching little poem, may compare the two, and decide which variant he prefers. Personally I think each version has some points of poetical superiority. The punctuation, and the use of capital letters, I ought to add, I have here arranged to please myself.



Some of Dr. Johnson's most famous and amusing remarks are those with which we least agree. Such a one was his reply, when he was asked whether Derrick or Smart were the better poet: "Sir, there is no settling the point of precedency between a louse and a flea." Of Derrick I say nothing, but Smart could not with justice be described as either insect, nor would Johnson have wished to be taken too seriously in this judgment, for he had a soft corner in his heart for Smart, and even for Derrick. One of the most vivid passages in Boswell deals with the unhappy author of *The Song to David*, who was, with Clare, one of the only two poets who ever wrote

good poetry in a madhouse. "Madness," said Johnson in 1763, "frequently discovers itself merely by unnecessary deviation from the usual modes of the world. My poor friend Smart showed the disturbance of his mind by falling upon his knees and saying his prayers in the street, or any other unusual place. Now although, rationally, it is greater madness not to pray at all than to pray as Smart did, I am afraid that there are so many who do not pray that their understanding is not called in question."

Boswell continues :

"Concerning the unfortunate poet, Christopher Smart, who was confined in a madhouse, he had, at another time, the following conversation with Dr. Burney. BURNAY : 'How does poor Smart do, sir ? Is he likely to recover ?' JOHNSON : 'It seems as if his mind had ceased to struggle with the disease ; for he grows fat upon it.' BURNAY : 'Perhaps, sir, that may be from want of exercise.' JOHNSON : 'No, sir ; he has partly as much exercise as he used to have, for he digs in the garden. Indeed, before his confinement, he used for exercise to walk to the ale-house ; but he was *carried* back again. I did not think he ought to be shut up. His infirmities were not noxious to society. He insisted on people praying with him ; and I'd as lief pray with Kit Smart as anyone else. Another charge was that he did not love clean linen ; and I have no passion for it.' "

Smart was born in 1722, and his unhappy career, in the course of which he had been a Fellow of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, and had come down to hiring himself out on a ninety-nine years' lease to a bookseller, came to an end in the rules of the Fleet prison in 1771. His *Song to David* is known to most people, and most of them regard Smart as a poet of one poem only. It is true that he wrote nothing else so great as the *Song*, but there are flashes of genius in various parts of his beautiful quarto, *Poems on Several Occasions*, which appeared in 1752—ten years before his most famous poem was scratched upon the walls of Bedlam. Especially in the first section of the book, the Odes, which show the influence of Gray's odes, are these flashes present; Gray, by the way, was a subscriber to the volume, and so was Mason; Pembroke (with Mason and Smart, and Gray just over the road at Peterhouse, but with most of his thoughts in Pembroke) must have been ringing with odes, as it was with petty quarrels, in the 1750's. Smart's attempts in this kind (odes, of course, not quarrels) show great metrical invention, based on Milton, Dryden, and Gray, though they are not often wholly successful as poems. By far the best is Ode XIII, *On an Eagle confined in a College Court*, in which the poet manages to combine great majesty of language with an effective cut at the then depraved and decadent condition of the University.

Imperial bird, who wont to soar
High o'er the rolling cloud,
Where Hyperborean mountains hoar
Their heads in Ether shroud ;—
Thou servant of almighty Jove,
Who, free and swift as thought, could'st rove
To the bleak north's extremest goal ;—
Thou, who magnanimous could'st bear
The sovereign thund'rer's arms in air,
And shake thy native pole !

Oh cruel fate ! what barbarous hand,
What more than Gothic ire,
At some fierce tyrant's dread command,
To check thy daring fire,
Has plac'd thee in this servile cell,
Where Discipline and Dulness dwell,
Where Genius ne'er was seen to roam ;
Where ev'ry selfish soul's at rest,
Nor ever quits the carnal breast,
But lurks and sneaks at home !

Tho' dim'd thine eye, and clipt thy wing,
So grov'ling ! once so great !
The grief-inspired Muse shall sing
In tend'rest lays thy fate.
What time by thee scholastic Pride
Takes his precise, pedantic stride,
Nor on thy mis'ry casts a care,
The stream of love ne'er from his heart
Flows out, to act fair pity's part ;
But stinks, and stagnates there.

Yet useful still, hold to the throng—
 Hold the reflecting glass,—
 That not untutor'd at thy wrong
 The passenger may pass :
 Thou type of wit and sense confin'd,
 Cramp'd by the oppressors of the mind,
 Who study downward on the ground ;
 Type of the fall of Greece and Rome ;
 While more than mathematic gloom
 Envelopes all around !

The wind of inspiration blows through that, as it
 blew more keenly and more frantically through the
Song to David. Nothing else in the book comes
 up to it ; and *The Hop-garden*, a Georgic in two
 books, reads like Armstrong-cum-Philips gone
 dully mad, save for a passage describing hop-
 picking, which has an archæological interest.
 Among the lighter pieces at the end of the book,
 however, are some lines to *The Lass with the Golden
 Locks*, Anna Maria Carnan, later his wife, which
 run trippingly in anapæsts that are cunningly
 varied with iambs.

No more of my Harriot, of Polly no more,
 Nor all the bright beauties that charm'd me before ;
 My heart for a slave to gay Venus I've sold,
 And barter'd my freedom for ringlets of gold :
 I'll throw down my pipe, and neglect all my flocks,
 And will sing to my lass with the golden locks.

Tho' o'er her white forehead the gilt tresses flow,
 Like the rays of the sun on a hillock of snow ;
 Such painters of old drew the Queen of the Fair,
 'Tis the taste of the antients, 'tis classical hair :
 And tho' witlings may scoff, and tho' raillery mocks,
 Yet I'll sing to my lass with the golden locks.

To live and to love, to converse and be free,
 Is loving, my charmer, and living with thee :
 Away go the hours in kisses and rhyme,
 Spite of all the grave lectures of old father Time ;
 A fig for his dials, his watches and clocks,
 He's best spent with the lass of the golden locks.

Than the swan in the brook she's more dear to my
 sight,
 Her mien is more stately, her breast is more white,
 Her sweet lips are rubies, all rubies above,
 Which are fit for the language or labour of love ;
 At the park in the mall, at the play in the box,
 My lass bears the bell with her golden locks.

Her beautiful eyes, as they roll or they flow,
 Shall be glad for my joy, or shall weep for my woe ;
 She shall ease my fond heart, and shall soothe my soft
 pain,
 While thousands of rivals are sighing in vain ;
 Let them rail at the fruit they can't reach, like the fox,
 While I have the lass with the golden locks.

I fear the beautiful eyes had more cause to weep
 than to be glad, though Kit Smart, with all his

weaknesses, cannot have been an altogether unloveable fellow. He was certainly neither a flea nor a louse, even leaving out of account the *Song to David*; and we must not take the dictum of Dr. Johnson—not the least attractive of whose qualities, incidentally, was his personal kindness to poets whose work he did not admire—too much *au pied de la lettre*.



And now, who in Helicon, or thereabouts, shall fill the few remaining pages of this humble work, which, I pray you to remember, dear reader, is not a literary history of any period, and does not pretend to offer an exhaustive treatment even of the poets whose work it includes? The crowd of my omissions throngs about my ears. First and foremost, there are the minor Satirists of the eighteenth century, with that vigorous buffeter, Charles Churchill, their head; but these must be reserved for another occasion, should the public “signify in the usual manner” their willingness for more. Then one might put together some pretty notes on the poets who struggled, with various success, against unfortunate names: Stephen Duck, James Waddell (the cobbler “poet-laureate of Plessy and the neighbouring villages,” *floruit circa* 1809), Thomas Creech, and Thomas Tickell—ill-omened names, all of them, wherewith to court the Muse. Or one might draw a picture

of the below-stairs poets—John Jones, the butler (to whose *Attempts in Verse* Southey gave a blessing and an introduction), Robert Dodsley, the footman, Mrs. Leapor, the cook-maid, and Mrs. Ann Yearsley (or “Lactila”), the Bristol milk-woman. Each of these subjects might be written upon delectably, but to do so would demand more space and more industry than I am for the moment master of. So let me pick two poets, Stephen Duck and Robert Dodsley, from the rest, and let us dipalittle into their verses before we bring these notes to an end. Yet ere we do this let me redeem a half-promise I made earlier on in this book—that possibly I might glance at the other works of the Rev. Wetenhall Wilkes, in the British Museum. I have done so, rather to my own pleasurable surprise, but found nothing very remarkable. *The Chase*, of which I made mention as being appended to *The Pleasures and Advantages of Female Literature* (1741), is merely a quotation of the fox-hunting passage in *Hounslow Heath*. I also found four other poems of his: an agreeable but not remarkable comparison in octosyllabics of the toils of town life with the pleasures of a rural existence, and three Irish landscapes. The most pleasing thing of Wilkes’s, however, was the prose introduction to *Hounslow Heath*, not reprinted in 1870 by Pinkerton, but containing a highly ingenious and ingenuous defence of hunting. The Rev. Mr. Wilkes might, possibly, be

worth collecting and editing, one of these days. He speaks in one or two places of having a collection of his poems ready for the Press, but, as far as I am aware, this was never published. And so now to Duck and to Dodsley.



Stephen Duck was the first of the peasant-poets of England, being born in 1705, of parents of the labouring class, at Charlton in Wiltshire. According to an anonymous and sprightly (though unreliable) biographer, "we find he had some small share of Reading and Writing bestowed on him, with very little or no Grammar : For before he had reached his Syntax, his Mother had a very notable Complaint exhibited against him by his Schoolmaster, viz., *That he took to his Learning too fast, even faster than the Master could give it to him.* So that the prudent Parent, to prevent so *growing an Evil*, removed her Son from School to the Plow, lest he might become too fine a Gentleman for the Family that produced him." How true this story is I cannot say, but it is at any rate picturesque, and we know from a more reliable biographer, Joseph Spence, that Duck worked as a thresher on a farm for a weekly wage of four shillings and sixpence. One of his friends had been to London as a footman, and had brought back to Wiltshire a few books, among them *Paradise Lost*, *The Spectator*, a volume containing seven

plays of Shakespeare, and some other things. These books the two friends read together with the aid of a Dictionary and some sort of a grammar. Duck, it is said, would work extra hard in order that he might earn a few minutes off to devote to reading, and gradually he took to amusing himself by working his thoughts, in his own mind, into bits of verse ; a little later he began writing down some of these verses on paper—which he always burnt afterwards. According to the biographer I quoted at the beginning of this paragraph, Stephen's wife did not encourage him in his poetical pursuits, for " when he was *Scanning* his Lines, she would oftentimes run out and raise the whole neighbourhood, telling the People, *That her Husband dealt with the Devil, and was going mad because he did nothing all day but talk to himself and tell his Fingers.*" Perhaps as a result of this conduct upon the part of Mrs. Duck, Stephen's fame as a scholar and poet began to spread in his village and the vicinity. His earliest surviving poem is an *Epistle* written in 1729 at the request of " A young Gentleman of Oxford." By this time he had attracted the notice of some of the local clergy, and his next productions were written often upon themes suggested by them or their wives. These poems were, in the order of composition, *On Poverty*, *The Thresher's Labour*, and *The Shunamite*. These were handed about in manuscript, and on September 11th, 1730, they

were read aloud to Queen Caroline, who constituted herself his patroness and made him an allowance of thirty pounds a year. In 1730, also, a pirated edition of his poems was published, which had a great success, and had prefixed to it the entertaining anonymous memoir from which I have quoted. By far the best of Duck's verses is *The Thresher's Labour*, which gives a direct, simple, and convincing account of the life of a farm labourer, and is written in verse which is surprisingly good, when Duck's opportunities of education are taken into account. And, even judged by any standard, the verses are very far from being without merit. Let me quote a passage which will, I trust, convince my readers that our Duck could move not at all ungracefully or unvigorously :

Divested of our Cloathes, with Flail in Hand,
 At proper Distance, Front to Front we stand :
 And first the Threshal's gently swung to prove
 Whether with just Exactness it will move :
 That once secure, we swiftly whirl them round ;
 From the strong Planks our Crab-tree Staves rebound,
 And echoing Barns return the rattling Sound.
 Now in the Air our knotty Weapons fly,
 And now with equal Force descend from high ;
 Down one, one up, so well they keep the Time,
 The Cyclops' Hammers could not truer chime ;
 Nor with more heavy Strokes could Ætna groan,
 When Vulcan forg'd the Arms for Thetis' Son.

In briny Streams our Sweat descends apace,
 Drops from our Locks, or trickles down our Face.
 No Intermission in our Work we know ;
 The noisy Threshal must for ever go.
 Their Master absent, others safely play ;
 The sleeping Threshal does itself betray.
 Nor yet, the tedious Labour to beguile,
 And make the passing Minutes sweetly smile,
 Can we, like Shepherds, tell a merry Tale ;
 The voice is lost, drown'd by the louder Flail.
 But we may think—Alas ! what pleasing thing,
 Here, to the Mind, can the dull Fancy bring ?
 Our eye beholds no pleasing Object here,
 No cheerful Sound diverts our list'ning Ear.
 The Shepherd well may tune his Voice to sing,
 Inspir'd with all the Beauties of the Spring.
 No Fountains murmur here, no Lambkins play,
 No Linnets warble, and no Fields look gay ;
 'Tis all a gloomy, melancholy Scene,
 Fit only to provoke the Muse's Spleen.

.

Week after Week, we this dull Task pursue,
 Unless when winn'wing Days produce a new ;
 A new, indeed, but frequently a worse !
 The Threshal yields but to the Master's Curse.
 He counts the Bushels, counts how much a Day ;
 He swears we've idled half our Time away :
 " Why, look ye, Rogues, d'ye think that this will do ?
 Your Neighbours thresh as much again as you."
 Now in our Hands we wish our noisy Tools,
 To drown the hated Names of Rogues and Fools ;

But wanting these, we just like School-boys look,
 When angry Masters view the blotted Book :
 They cry, " Their Ink was faulty, and their Pen " ;
 We " The Corn threshes bad, 'twas cut too green."

The poet continues to give accounts of the labourer's other tasks in the course of the year, and how each of them is for a moment pleasant as a change, but soon becomes wearisome. After the description of the getting in of the harvest, the poem ends with these lines :

Our Master joyful at the pleasing Sight,
 Invites us all to feast with him at Night.
 A Table plentifully spread we find,
 And Jugs of humming Ale, to chear the Mind ;
 Which he, too gen'rous, pushes round so fast,
 We think no Toils to come, nor mind the past.
 But the next Morning soon reveals the Cheat,
 When the same Toils we must again repeat :
 To the same Barns must back again return,
 To labour there for Room for next Year's Corn.

Thus, as the Year's revolving Course goes round,
 No Respite from our Labour can be found :
 Like Sisyphus, our Work is never done,
 Continually rolls back the restless Stone :
 New-growing Labours still succeed the past,
 And growing always new, must always last.

The Thresher's Labour is a thing obviously genuine, a piece of pastoral reality, in strong contrast to the pastoral artificiality—often very charming—

which was so popular in Duck's time, and which so many people, unjustifiably, imagine to be one of the only two flowers—the other being Satire—upon the tree of eighteenth-century verse.

Queen Caroline continued her patronage of Duck; in 1733 she made him a Yeoman of the Guard, and in 1735 keeper of her Library at Richmond. In the interval he had married, for his second wife, Sarah Big, the Queen's housekeeper at Kew. In 1736 his *Poems on Several Occasions* was published, and Spence contributed to it an account of the poet's career. This book is a handsome quarto, with an engraved portrait of the poet, after a painting by Thornhill. Duck seems to have remained unspoiled as a man by his success, though the change of life removed from his verse the one touch of reality and originality which gave it value. In his later poems we find him aiming at the production of stuff indistinguishable from that of dozens of other poetasters. We find him writing such lines as :

His graceful Charms the Ladies oft survey'd,
And oft their Eyes an am'rous Signal made ;

or again :

No Mysteries of Faith disturb'd his Head ;
For Mysteries of Faith he seldom read ;
That moral Law, which Nature had imprest,
He blotted from the Volume of his Breast.

It is very easy to see that the aim of his verse has changed, though he still sometimes uses a simile with a tang of reality—though hardly of poetry—about it :

But, as a Child, in Thought, chews o'er
The Sweatmeats which he eat before ;
So in his Mind Alexis keeps
The dear Impression of her Lips.

How skilful Duck eventually became in reproducing the tricks of versification of his time is shown by such a trifle as this imitation of Prior's "Dear Thomas, did'st thou never pop Thy head into a Tinman's shop ? "

ON MITES

To a Lady

Dear Madam, did you never gaze
Thro' Optic-glass on rotten *Cheese* ?
There, Madam, did you ne'er perceive
A crowd of dwarfish Creatures live ?
The little Things, elate with Pride,
Strut to and fro, from Side to Side :
In tiny Pomp, and pertly vain,
Lords of their pleasing Orb, they reign ;
And, fill'd with harden'd Curds and Cream,
Think the whole Dairy made for *them*.

So Men, conceited Lords of all,
Walk proudly o'er this pendent Ball,

Fond of their little Spot below,
 Nor greater Beings care to know ;
 But think those Worlds, which deck the Skies,
 Were only form'd to please *their* Eyes.

Probably Stephen Duck really never grasped the peculiar merit of his early verse. He was always a most modest man, and when Spence warned him, early in his career, never to become vain, or to think too much of his own poems, he said, apparently quite honestly, "Gentlemen, indeed, might like 'em because they were made by a poor Fellow in a Barn ; but that he knew as well as anybody, that they were not really good in themselves." I suspect that, in his simplicity, Duck imagined his later verses to be better than *The Thresher's Labour*, which is certainly a poem. Yet, however Duck deteriorated as a poet, as a man he thoroughly justified the kindness and patronage shown him, and in 1746 he took orders. In 1749 he became Rector of Byfleet in Surrey. He seems to have made a good sort of clergyman, but unhappily in 1756 his mind gave way and he drowned himself in a fit of melancholia. So died a very remarkable and admirable man, the first to give literary expression to the deep feeling for poetry which is in the English peasantry, and which has given them, and us, the beautiful unliterary flower of English folk-song.

The story of the career of Robert Dodsley is too well known to need detailed repetition here ; a brief outline of his life, however, may be admissible. He was born in 1703, the son of the village schoolmaster at Mansfield in Nottinghamshire ; he was apprenticed to a stocking weaver, but was ill-treated, ran away and became a footman ; he began to write verses and plays, some of which were printed or acted, and in 1735, with the assistance of Pope, he opened a bookshop and publishing business at the Tully's Head in Pall Mall, which was destined to become the most famous publishing sign of the mid-eighteenth century ; he published Johnson's *London*, and Gray's *Elegy*, and many other famous books, issued his *Select Collection of Old Plays* in 1744, and his *Collection of Poems by Several Hands* in 1748 ; he died at Durham, while visiting Joseph Spence, in 1764. Dodsley was a man universally loved and respected, and one, in Shenstone's words, " of whose simplicity, benevolence, humanity, and true politeness I have had repeated and particular experience." It is only fair, I feel, that this notable and honourable man, who did so much for so many poets, should be the last poet represented in this anthology of mine. His earliest verse, *Servitude* (1729), and *The Muse in Livery* (1732), is of some merit in parts, and has a good deal of sentimental and social interest, as representing the point of view of a serving-man of the time ; but I do not

propose to quote any of it here. What I do propose, is to give, without any further palaver, one or two examples of his later talent—which at its best was nimble and polished—as a writer of epigrams and songs.

THE PARTING KISS

One kind kiss before we part,
 Drop a tear, and bid adieu ;
 Tho' we sever, my fond heart
 Till we meet shall pant for you.

Yet, yet weep not so, my love,
 Let me kiss that falling tear ;
 Tho' my body must remove,
 All my soul will still be here.

All my soul, and all my heart,
 And every wish shall pant for you ;
 One kind kiss, then, ere we part,
 Drop a tear, and bid adieu.

SONG

Man's a poor deluded bubble,
 Wand'ring in a mist of lies,
 Seeing false, or seeing double,
 Who would trust to such weak eyes ?
 Yet presuming on his senses,
 On he goes most wondrous wise :
 Doubts of truth, believes pretences ;
 Lost in error, lives and dies.

AN EPIGRAM

Cries Sylvia to a reverend dean,
 "What reason can be given,
 Since marriage is a holy thing,
 That there are none in heaven ?"

"There are no Women," he reply'd ;
 She quick returns the jest—
 "Women there are, but I'm afraid
 They cannot find a Priest."

THE KINGS OF EUROPE

A Jest

Why pray, of late, do Europe's kings
 No jester in their courts admit ?
 They're grown such stately solemn things,
 To hear a joke they think not fit.

But tho' each court a jester lacks,
 To laugh at monarchs to their face ;
 All mankind behind their backs
 Supply the honest jester's place.

AN EPIGRAM

*Occasion'd by the words "One Prior," in the
 second volume of Bishop Burnet's History*

One Prior !—and is this, this all the fame
 The poet from th' historian can claim ?
 No ; Prior's verse posterity shall quote,
 When 'tis forgot one Burnet ever wrote.

When Dodsley collected his pieces into a volume in 1745 he made no immoderate claim for them, but called them merely *Trifles*. But by such trifles as these, which I have just quoted, let him be remembered honourably among the English poets.

And now I have done. This booklet will in a minute or two be finished. And with what could it conclude more suitably than with an epitaph? So, as a parting gift to my readers, here is one—not, as would be most suitable, one upon a book, or upon an anthologist—but still an epitaph, and written by the poet with whom I began my trips along the by-ways of Helicon—Samuel Wesley the Younger, whose verse here seems to ring with an echo of the spirit of the old Latin lines on Fair Rosamond :

Hic jacet in tumulo Rosa Mundi non Rosa munda.
Non redolet, sed olet, quae redolere solet.

So here, then, is my last poem :

AN EPITAPH

Here lye I, once a witty Fair,
Ill loving and ill lov'd ;
Whose heedless Beauty was my Snare,
Whose Wit my Folly prov'd.

Reader, should any curious stay
 To ask my luckless Name,
 Tell them, the Grave that hides my Clay
 Conceals me from my Shame.

Tell them, I mourn'd for Guilt of Sin,
 More than for Pleasure spent :
 Tell them, whate'er my Morn had been,
 My Noon was Penitent.

THE END

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